The Charms of the Old Book

George Huntington

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THE CHARMS OF THE OLD BOOK

OR

A Study of the Attractions of the Bible

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BY

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A PRIZE BOOK

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This work, "The Charms of the Old Book," is a new study of the attractions of the Bible. That it won a prize in competition with many worthy and scholarly works indicates its freshness and merit. It presents a store of information and thought which fully justifies its title, making it worthy of the attention of thoughtful readers.

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION..... 7

CHAPTER I.

FEATURES AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS..... 15

CHAPTER II.

THE CHARM OF ORAL TRADITION..... 29

CHAPTER III.

THE OLDEST STORY IN THE WORLD..... 44

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF EDEN..... 53

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY OF THE TWO BROTHERS..... 62

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD..... 68

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAKING OF A NATION..... 75

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCHOOL IN THE DESERT..... 88

CHAPTER IX.

THE HEROIC AGE..... 100

CHAPTER X.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF HEBREW HISTORY..... 115

CHAPTER XI.

RISE AND GLORY OF THE HEBREW MONARCHY..... 122

CHAPTER XII.

DISRUPTION AND DISINTEGRATION..... 130

PAGE

CHAPTER XIII.
THE CHARM OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY..... 140

CHAPTER XIV.
THE CHARM OF OLD TESTAMENT POETRY..... 156

CHAPTER XV.
THE INSPIRED STORY-BOOK..... 175

CHAPTER XVI.
THE VOICELESS CENTURIES..... 186

CHAPTER XVII.
OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION CONTINUED IN THE NEW 193

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE FOUR PILLARS OF GOSPEL HISTORY..... 207

CHAPTER XIX.
GOD WITH US..... 220

CHAPTER XX.
THE GREAT TEACHER..... 232

CHAPTER XXI.
THE MAKING OF THE CHURCH..... 244

CHAPTER XXII.
STORIES OF CHRISTIAN CONQUEST..... 254

CHAPTER XXIII.
SOME PRICELESS OLD LETTERS..... 262

CHAPTER XXIV.
FIVE NOTABLE WORDS FROM THE VOCABULARY OF DUTY..... 275

CHAPTER XXV.
FIVE NOTABLE WORDS FROM THE VOCABULARY OF EXPERIENCE..... 285

CHAPTER XXVI.
REFLECTIONS AND SIDE-LIGHTS ON BIBLICAL ATTRACTIONS..... 295

INDEX..... 311

INTRODUCTION.

THE following volume owes its production to the happy thought of the American Sunday-School Union, in calling for a brief volume upon the general subject, "The Bible an Attractive Book."

Topic of book.

The theme itself is attractive, and the point of view which it proposes presents the field of biblical study in an aspect peculiarly fascinating. A book is said to be attractive when it possesses any charm or excellence which draws attention to it, induces people to read it, and secures their interest in its contents. Its attractions may be external or internal. It may attract the general public or an exclusive class. Its charm may last for a year or for all time. It may afford a passing sensation, or it may shape character, institutions or human destiny.

It is needless to say, therefore, that attractiveness in this large sense—the sum total of all the elements that make a book desirable—is no trifling thing. It is, in

fact, the one thing that is indispensable. For, whatever else the book may or may not have, and whatever source or sacredness it may claim, if it have not some sort of attractiveness it will have no readers, and if it have no readers it can have no power. To this logic the Bible, like every other book, must be frankly submitted.

In proposing a study of the Bible from this point of view, certain requirements and limitations are named in the proposition, and others are implied by the purpose of the work and the auspices under which it is produced. It is required to be of a "practical, instructive, popular and evangelical character," and to be "germane to the objects of the American Sunday-School Union."

A popular book.

As to the first two of these requirements, the book must speak for itself. The third is no doubt to be understood as referring to the method of treatment, and not to the degree of favor with which it may be received by the public. It is to be popular in the sense that it shall appeal not to the few but the many, not to the scholar or the theologian merely, but to any thoughtful student of the Holy Scriptures.

Evangelical book.

The term "evangelical," though somewhat difficult to define, has a pretty distinct meaning as applied to doctrines and denominations. Besides that great body of truth held by all believers in Christianity, the so-called evangelical churches believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, in our obligation to obey God, in man's sinful disobedience and moral ruin, in the offer of pardon and salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, in regeneration through the Holy Spirit, in the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, in the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and life and death eternal. The scriptural validity of these doctrines is taken for granted in the following pages.

On union basis.

Furthermore, the character of the Society under whose auspices the book is produced, and to whose objects it must be germane, plainly require that, within evangelical limits, it should not be sectarian or controversial, but should present those beliefs only which all evangelical Christians hold in common. This not only forbids the consideration of those doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters upon which denominational distinctions are based, such as church polity, forms of wor-

ship, modes of administering the sacraments, etc.; it also limits the discussion of certain biblical problems which divide evangelical Christians not into sects but into different schools of thought.

Thus, while all such Christians believe the Scriptures to be inspired, they hold widely different views as to the nature and extent of inspiration. They all admit the divine origin and trustworthiness of prophecy, but they are not agreed as to the meaning of many specific predictions, or as to the laws of prophetic interpretation. With regard to these themes and many others, therefore, each of which has strong attractions for its own special class of Bible students, our present point of view embraces common ground only. To enter upon debatable territory would be inconsistent with the terms of our discussion.

Avoids critical controversies.

The same principle applies within the realm of biblical criticism, concerning which something might be expected in a work of this character. In the controversies of the critics with one another or with those who criticise them we can take no part. With that concensus of evangelical opinion which gratefully welcomes the contributions of some critics to the store of

biblical knowledge, and rejects the views of others as contrary to generally accepted truth, we cordially agree. The collation and comparison of ancient manuscripts, the interpretation of words, idioms and phrases, the explanation of geographical and historical allusions, the description of rites and customs, and the interpretation of obscure passages, furnish a field of criticism legitimate and indispensable. By its favor we have our translations, our commentaries, our Bible dictionaries and many special helps in Bible study. In this field evangelical scholarship has done a work of immense value, and we shall be largely indebted to it in our survey of the attractions of the Bible. With that type of criticism which rejects the supernatural element in inspiration, denies the authoritative character of the Scriptures, regards miracles, special revelations and special providences as inherently incredible, and prophets, apostles, and even Jesus himself, as merely well-meaning men, speaking the truth as they understood it, but with no authority that is binding upon present-day faith or conduct, this volume has nothing in common.

But besides these conclusions which the

Presents accepted results.

great mass of evangelical believers agree in accepting, and those which, with equal unanimity, they agree in rejecting, there are in the field of biblical criticism, as in others previously noted, many problems of great interest and importance concerning which there is no general agreement. They relate, among other things, to such matters as the sources of biblical material, the authorship and historical relations of certain books, etc. No class of subjects occupies a larger space in current religious discussion. None has more sharply divided religious opinion, both within and without the ranks of sacred scholarship. The uncritical suffer much confusion of mind concerning it, and the critical arrive at contradictory opinions. We must leave the discussion in their hands. It is highly desirable that the questions involved be thoroughly debated, and that every mature student of Scripture inform himself upon the merits of the argument, and form for himself intelligent and defensible opinions; but it is not within the range of our present study. We have now to do with the Bible as we find it; and our attitude toward it is that not of disputation but of appreciation.

Happily, our survey loses nothing either of interest or of value through these limitations. The chief attractions of Scripture are not in the things that divide us but in the things that unite us, in that broad common ground of truth where we see eye to eye, and join hand to hand in Christian brotherhood and unity.

Not limited but liberal.

As to the point of view selected, it is not to be counted as a limitation, but as an enlargement and liberalization of thought. The outlook it affords upon the field of biblical study is wide and comprehensive. Not only is attractiveness an essential quality in any book, and a notable quality in the Book of books, it includes all other qualities. For every excellence the book possesses—diction, style, poetic beauty, sublimity of thought, philosophy, instruction, moral teaching, or any other good quality—each of them is one of its attractions. Such is the wide scope of attractiveness.

Threefold attractions.

The measure of attractiveness is threefold—quality, quantity, time. What specific features and elements does the Bible possess that are fitted to win the attention and awaken the interest of men? Over how many and what classes of people

has its charm been actually exerted? What degree of continuity and permanence has there been in this attractive power? Its appeal to us is threefold—the attractions of a great literature, the attractions of great truths, the attractions of great lives.

CHARMS OF THE OLD BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

FEATURES AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

A wonderful Book has come down to us from the great past. Or rather let us say, we have come to the Book, as our fathers and fathers' fathers came to it before us, as our children and our children's children will come to it after us.

Bible ancient.

It is an *ancient* Book, how ancient we cannot tell. Somewhere between eighteen and nineteen centuries ago its last page was finished. Not less than twelve to fifteen centuries before that its first page was begun. But though ancient, it is not antiquated. Though undated, it is never out of date. Other books perish, and the men that made them die and are forgotten. This Book lives on, imperishable and immortal, because it enshrines in its pages

imperishable truth, and because it is itself enshrined in the immortal life of men.

It is a small book. A child can hold it in his hand. A few ounces of paper, a few hundred pages of print, that is all. If we measure it by the words it contains, it equals but three-fourths of an ordinary cyclopedic volume. If we estimate it by the value of its contents, it outweighs the literature of the world.

Many-sided.

It is a *wonderfully diversified* book. Many different authors, we do not know how many, living at various times and in various places, contributed to its composition. A great variety of literary forms are employed—history, biography, poetry, oratory, allegory, letters, prayers, meditations, prophecies, rhapsodies—every mode of approach to the human mind, every mode of appeal to the human heart. With good reason men have called the Bible a library, rather than a book.

Yet it is not a mere collection. It has —it is—a wonderful unity. Its sixty-six so-called books are not unrelated productions, but parts of one whole, like the stones in a great mosaic, fitted perfectly together, supplementing, complementing each other, and together making a single

work of divine skill and beauty. Its forty or fifty authors, scattered over many lands and over more than a thousand years of time, are not so many isolated voices, speaking each his own independent message, from and to his own age, but the voices of a great chorus, each in his assigned place, and having his assigned part, answering one another, echoing one another, blending with one another in sublime harmony. One great theme runs through the whole composition. One great purpose shapes and dominates it from beginning to end.

Bible unique.

It is a *unique* book. Amid the bewildering mass that pours in a ceaseless avalanche from the world's printing-presses, heaping its volumes by thousands and by millions all around us, this one volume stands apart, unlike any other in its origin, in its authorship, in its character, in its history, in the solemn import of its message, in the reverent regard it commands, in the power of influence it exerts upon the lives and the destiny of men.

Its origin and authorship.

It is unique in its *origin*. The materials for it began to accumulate in that remote "beginning" when God called worlds into being; and every succeeding epoch of

human history and every passing phase of human experience contributed something to its store of fact and truth.

It is unique in its *authorship.* Not only was no one author deemed competent to write it, the two or three score of writers who participated in its production were not equal to the task, except as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit." God himself presided over the process. In what precise way he did it no man can tell. The Scriptures claim inspiration, but do not explain its methods, its extent, or its relation to the faculties and the voluntary action of the one inspired. The men who received it did not understand it, and sometimes, apparently, did not even understand the import of their own message. But the reality of it is beyond question, and its source is unquestionably divine. It was something more than the inspiration of human genius, something more than the mere mental exaltation of a Socrates or a Shakespeare. It was the inspiration of a holy mind touched and quickened by the Spirit of God, who, in ways which we call supernatural, but which to him are as natural as the action of sunbeams on rose-buds, so wrought upon

and through human faculties as to preserve their freedom and individuality unimpaired, and yet impart a power of spiritual insight, a perception of spiritual truth, a facility of thought and expression not otherwise possible.

This alone lifts the Bible immeasurably above all other books in the world, and draws us to it with a power of attraction which they can never exert. Are we seeking religious truth? Here are its unpolluted fountains. Are we searching for the path of religious duty? Here is the authoritative guide. Are we asking after God? here is his answering voice.

Its character.

The Bible is unique in its *character*. It is not a book of science. It is not a book of philosophy. It is not a mere achievement in literature. It is a book of religion. And its religion is that of the true God, and that of a pure, rational, credible, wholesome, self-consistent system of truth. Other religions have their sacred books. The Hindu has his Vedas; the Persian has his Zend-Avestas; the Chinaman has his Confucian Analects; the Mohammedan has his Koran. All these are interesting as literature. They constitute the best literature of the peoples that pro-

duced them. Such is the power of mental exaltation in even a misguided religious enthusiasm. But as religious oracles and religious guides they are failures, full of falsehood and absurdity. The saving virtue in them all is that remnant of primeval truth which is the common heritage of the race, but which, borne far and wide with the various streams of migration, spreading over the earth, took on corrupt forms, degraded and degrading. The Bible, on the other hand, presents to us that same primitive truth, preserved in its original integrity, and developed into a completed system, fit for all men, for all time.

Its message.

It is unique in the *message* it brings. The splendid ideals of character it has given the world, the standard of morality it has set up, the noble virtues it demands, the conscientiousness, the uprightness, the unselfishness, the strong manhood, the pure womanhood, the justice, probity, veracity, magnanimity, reverence—who can enumerate all those elements of ideal character for which we are indebted to the Bible? And from what other source ever came that fine conception which combines them all, and much besides, in a living

and beautiful unity? The world is, to be sure, full of books that inculcate them, and of voices that proclaim them. But they are merely echoes of the divine message, heralds repeating what they have heard. The source of it all, and the only source, is the word of God.

Its history.

The Bible is unique in its *history*. He who inspired its utterances also directed the methods of its formation. Here, also, processes are concealed from us; results only are revealed to us. But those results are unmistakably providential. The selection from the multitudinous events of vast historic and prehistoric epochs, of precisely those items which were not only best worth saving, but best fitted to serve the moral and spiritual purposes of the coming book; the choice of the race, the nation and the individuals through whom the revelation should be given to the world; the gradual growth of the volume, age after age; the gradual shaping of it according to a definite plan; its preservation through all the vicissitudes of war and peace, declension and revival, captivity and restoration; its committal to the two languages best adapted to the purpose—Hebrew, the traditional speech of

prophets and people, and Greek, the vernacular of the Gentile world—all this is surely providential. There was a providence in that blending of religious faith and literary zeal which multiplied copies, and preserved them in spite of scoffing, hate and persecution. There is a providence in that enthusiasm of consecrated scholarship that has hunted the world over for manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts, collating, comparing, combining, translating, with infinite toil and patience, that the pentecostal miracle might be repeated, and that we all might hear, "every man in our own language wherein we were born."

The Bible is unique in the *hold it has* on the minds and the lives of men. The dominant nations of the earth live under governments and institutions founded upon its teachings. Millions are engaged in its systematic study. Hundreds of millions have accepted it as their rule of faith and practice. The sun never sets upon its domain. Round and round the earth stretches the great host of those who love it, who live by it, and who would willingly die for it, if need required.

To a not inconsiderable number of peo-

ple, here and there upon the face of the earth, it has *the charm of novelty,* and of association with new religious experiences. For joy of it they have renounced analects and vedas, and korans, and pagan superstitions, and godless indifference and degradation. To them no other book is so fascinating, so absorbing.

Charm of novelty.

But to most of us it has rather the charm of *lifelong familiarity.* It is associated with delightful memories and with our hearts' dearest affections. We cannot tell when we first saw its shape or listened to its words, any more than we can tell when we first looked into our mother's face, or heard her voice. Most likely we saw it first in her hands, and heard it first from her lips. Long, long ago, before we could read a syllable of it, before we knew its import, or even its name, she had made us familiar with its simple stories, and filled our imagination with word-pictures of its characters and heroes.

Note well this earliest step in our knowledge of biblical fact and life. It shows us, in its simplest form, that whose larger and more complex aspects we shall presently have occasion to study at some length,—revelation communicated through the me-

dium of the living voice, or, as we should more technically express it, through oral tradition, the natural and normal beginning of all literature.

Conditions of revelation.

Notice also how the *conditions of a reliable revelation* were secured. On the one hand, there was the saintly mother, like a prophetess of God, with unquestioning faith in her message, with deep reverence for its sacredness, with jealous regard for its integrity, with tender regard for her one rapt listener, and a profound sense of responsibility for his spiritual culture. On the other hand, there was the listener himself, knowing nothing yet of the source of the narratives he heard, connecting them with no book, cumbering them with no puzzling questions, but accepting them in absolute faith, as he did all other items of fact, upon his mother's word. On the one hand was the divine origin and authority of the story, on the other was its human tone and mode of speech, and the sweet personality that pervaded it.

Divine and human.

After a time another personality connected itself with the Word. Another voice joined in the utterance. Now the Book appeared definitely upon the scene. There was one who daily took it in his

hands, and read a portion from its pages, and prayed to the God of whom it spoke. If the godly mother was the prophetess of the home, the godly father was its priest. Again we heard the old stories, somewhat more formally phrased, but in substance unchanged. Again we saw the hero-pictures, set in a different light, but easy of recognition. Other portions of the Book were also read—law, history, poetry, prophecy, maxims of practical wisdom, sermons, parables, epistles, of which some substantial fragments found lodgment in the mind, while a general impression of the sacredness of it all remained with us.

Later still, we were allowed to take part in the daily household service. We sat by our father's side, spelling out the holy sayings, word by word, with little perception of their meaning, to be sure, but with a growing sense of something weighty and authoritative in them.

And day by day, and year by year, as we grew in stature and in knowledge, the Book opened wider and wider fields to us, and took on a deeper and deeper meaning. We discovered that it is a Book to live by, and that those who loved it most were making it the counsellor of their life. We

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heard them quote it as the utterance of infallible wisdom, and appeal to it as the court of last resort upon questions of faith or duty. We saw that their kindness, their gentleness, their unselfishness, their conscientiousness, their nobility of motive, their unimpeachable integrity, their loyalty to truth, their fidelity to obligation, the fair, rounded symmetry of their virtues —all that made them sweet and lovable— had been drawn, directly or indirectly, from this marvelous Book.

Here, then, was a new step in our knowledge of it, a new mode of revelation—not revelation by the living voice merely, but revelation by life itself, the embodiment in noblest manhood and purest, loveliest womanhood, of the holy thought of God.

Appeal to spiritual.

The next step was inevitable, the appeal of the Book to our own spiritual nature. We saw that its stories were not stories merely, but disclosures of great truths concerning God and man. We saw that its hero-portraits were not pictures merely, but ideals by which to gauge our own manhood. We saw that its high moral and spiritual standards were not for our elders merely, but for ourselves, for the regeneration and reconstruction of our character and life.

So at last the Book found us. Its lessons of practical wisdom commended themselves to our reason. The holy law of God searched our hearts and smote us down in humiliation and shame. The gospel of our Lord lifted us up with invitation and promise, and led us into the way of peace.

Such, then, was the progressive order of processes by which revealed truth came to us—revelation by the spoken word, revelation by the written page, revelation by example, revelation by experience. Each method was in its turn the one best adapted to the needs of the unfolding mind. Each was adequate and conclusive for its own time and purpose. And each successive step borrowed force and meaning from those that preceded it, and took over into itself all that was essential in them.

Now, however usual or unusual the experience just sketched may be, and whatever intrinsic interest may or may not attach to it as a reminiscence, it is strikingly typical of the method divinely employed for making revelations to mankind. The process which we have traced within its narrowest sphere has its counterpart in the wider one. As the godly human parent deals with the unfold-

ing mind of the child, the youth, the man, adapting the form and method of communication to his changing condition, capacity and needs, so the divine Parent dealt with the childhood, and the progressive mental and spiritual development of the race. The speaking voice, the written page, living examples, personal experience—these are the methods by which divine wisdom brought to men the Word of life.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHARM OF ORAL TRADITION.

As in the case of the child receiving his first impressions of revealed truth, so in the case of the race, the earliest method of revelation, and we know not for how many centuries and millenniums the only method, was the oral.

Oral Bible.

No other method was possible. The speaking voice was the sole means of communication between mind and mind, man and man. Do not pity them. In proportion to their needs, their facilities for intercourse were as ample as our own. All the great literatures of the world began in the same way. History, romance, poetry, philosophy, science, all were primarily taught by word of mouth. Sacred literature was at no disadvantage on that account. No method could have been more favorable to accuracy of statement, or to clearness of expression, or to the permanence of the production. None could

present revelation in more attractive aspects. As the mother's voice gave a warmth and charm to the ancient story, so the personality of the story-tellers of the past, through whom it was transmitted from age to age, imparted to it a certain temperature and tone that stirs our sympathy. This is the charm of oral tradition, sacred or profane. There is a thrill of human feeling in it that pertains to no other literature, a sense of connection and contact with the actual life of foregone generations. Each narrator, as he repeats the familiar tale, tells it in his own way, with those idioms and colloquialisms and mannerisms that infuse into it something of his own personality, and make it the utterance of the real voice of a real man.

Now this peculiar charm is possessed to a remarkable degree by the early Scripture narratives, and we may well be grateful for it. These narratives appeal to us not only by their intrinsic interest, but by the subtle personality that pervades them, and that lights and populates the empty spaces of primeval history with human faces. We hear human voices and the throb of living hearts. Sometimes, as in the stories of Eden and the flood, the tale is twice-

told, as if, while one narrator is giving his version, another breaks in with his, saying, "Let me tell it, too," thus giving it double distinction and emphasis by the repetition.

Twice-told tales.

This aspect of Scripture deserves more general attention. The great field of modern scholarship and the great battle-ground of modern criticism is *the documents* which furnished the materials for our present Bible. It is a field of immense importance to biblical study, and one of which the Bible student cannot afford to be ignorant. It is an attractive field, and to a multitude of devout scholars is so alluring, that they have devoted their lives to its exploration, and have brought to it an amount of learning, industry and enthusiasm that has put the whole world in their debt.

Oral before written.

But there is another region through which the stream of revelation ran, a region vast and mysterious and fascinating. It is the realm of *oral tradition.* If the materials of our present Bible came from documents, whence came the materials of the documents? What did men have in lieu of them during the long ages that elapsed before the first word of the

first document was written? What constituted the Bible of Abel and Enoch and Abraham, of Jacob and Joseph? How was the knowledge of the great facts of human history and the great realities of the true religion kept alive in the minds of men, preserved from corruption and deterioration, and passed on in unimpaired integrity from generation to generation for thousands of years, till it pleased God to admit to this sacred service the fine new art of writing? Modern archæological discovery has shown that art to have been much more ancient and much more common than has generally been supposed. Inscriptions were chiseled on monuments and palace-walls, and stamped on tablets of clay. In this clumsy fashion facts were recorded, literature was produced and correspondence was carried on, and so-called libraries were formed, long before the time of Moses. But this literary period, however early may be the date to which we can reasonably assign it, was preceded by ages of oral tradition when writing was not only unknown but impossible. It was also unnecessary. Instead of books, men had what for those times, and for the purposes of revelation under existing con-

ditions, was far better than dead parchment, or frail papyrus, or tablet of clay, or inscription on brick or stone. The divinely-chosen repository of those facts and truths which were to become the permanent possession of the race was the living mind. The divinely-chosen instrumentality through which they were to be brought forth and transmitted to other minds, and to others and others still, in endless repetitions, was the living voice.

Patriarchal system.

The patriarchal system was admirably suited to this method. The union of several generations in one great family or tribe, the extreme longevity of the patriarchs, life overlapping life by whole centuries, the great deference shown to the head of the clan, the oriental love of story and wise discourse, and the lack of other means of mental stimulus or entertainment, all combined to give interest to such an occasion. It was their only school, with the wisest of the tribe for teachers, and all that was best worth knowing for study. It was their only literature, published in limited but adequate and growing editions, and always in popular demand.

We can easily imagine the scenes of such

a life, and the place that sacred tradition must have had in its quiet, leisurely hours. We can see the group of shepherds on the hillside, or the harvesters at their noonday meal, the mother with her child in her arms, the father with his son at his knee, the gathering of the household at the tent door in the cool of the day, while the well-loved voice holds the circle in rapt attention.

First story.

Not improbably *the first instalment* of what we now call the Bible was a simple story, told by a father or a mother to a child. How and when they had received it, what its subject was, or what proof of divine authentication they found in it, we cannot tell. It may have been the tragedy of sin. It may have been the idyl of a beautiful and stainless Eden. It may have been the sublime story of creation. At any rate it was a notable story, and it had in it elements that distinguish it from any trivial tales that may have been current in the gossip of the time. It was a true story. It was a story about God. It was a story with a purpose and a moral. It was a story that had in it a lesson for all mankind and for all time. So much, at least, is certain from the fact that it became

a part of permanent and authentic revelation, and remains so to this day.

Other material was added from time to time in a similar way. The method continued to be oral. The living voice was still the medium of communication, and of publication, and it proved itself a perfectly satisfactory agency for the purpose.

The speakers were of course not aware of the full import of the history they were relating; much less did they dream that out of it God had begun the making of a Bible for the race. Yet, considering his place in the events related, and considering their bearing on the religious life of men, the thoughtful relator could not but have been impressed with a certain deep significance in it all, and of a sacred obligation to preserve and transmit it unimpaired.

First critics.

Not less important to the integrity of the narrative was the *attitude of the auditors* toward it. They held it in equal reverence. They believed it implicitly. They grew up under its influence, and it grew into their thought and their life. They knew it by heart, and were competent judges of its accuracy. Every listener was a critic, alert and exacting. No addition, no omission, no alteration could escape

them. Thus the narrative, having taken shape while the facts themselves were familiar and often fresh in the minds of living witnesses, and having been securely lodged in the memories of reverent listeners, was kept intact by the zealous care of the relator on the one hand, and the jealous vigilance of the hearer on the other.

But we must not lose sight of the fact that while God thus trusted such precious treasure to earthen vessels, while he risked the perpetual integrity of his word upon the story-telling, story-loving instincts of men, and while the narratives retained their human quality and individuality, their perpetuity was determined by his will. He determined what was to be included in permanent Scripture, and, more critical still, what was to be excluded from it. The incipient volume of revelation was not to be a cyclopedia, or an exhaustive history of the race. It was to be the repository of certain cardinal facts and principles of lasting importance to the life and destiny of men. The brevity of it, its reticence, its silences, its omissions are among the most striking signs of its divine origin, and are distinct elements of its attractiveness. No human volubility here!

The entire period from Adam to Abraham, to which the most conservative chronologists assign from two to three thousand years, contributes but six thousand words, embracing but *seven principal items* of history,—the creation and first estate of man, the first sin, the first murder, the genealogy of the patriarchs, the deluge, the distribution of races, the call of Abram. Each of these items has to do with man's religious life. In each scene or event portrayed God is the chief actor, and religion is the largest interest involved.

Genealogies.

The surprising thing, to the casual reader, is that, of the seven brief passages, two are devoted to genealogy. But nowhere is the hand of God more evident. In the first genealogical record, in the fourth and fifth chapters of Genesis, we see the hereditary line through which sacred history was to come down to us. In the second, in the tenth chapter, we see God separating from the rest of mankind, and setting apart for a holy vocation, the race he had chosen to preserve the true faith upon the earth, and to transmit to other races and to other ages its divinely authentic revelation. Out of the whole antediluvian world he selected for this pur-

pose one godly family, whose head was not only personally righteous, but a "preacher of righteousness" to his contemporaries, thus continuing the method of revelation by the living voice. Of the three branches of that family, springing from the three sons, and beginning the repopulation of the earth, divine wisdom selected as the repository of revelation the smallest, the most exclusive and the most stationary, the Semitic. From the Semites, three hundred years later, *Abram* was selected, as the man best fitted, racially and personally to be the father and the founder of the nation to which were to be "entrusted the oracles of God." From that nation five hundred to eight hundred years later still, *Moses* was raised up, the great seer, scholar, orator, poet, jurist, ruler, general, with whom, as is generally believed, began the era of written revelation.

The Semites.

But though the time had then come to put the divine messages into more tangible and permanent form, it still continued to be, so far as the people were concerned, chiefly oral. The written copy was for preservation and reference, not for circulation. There were no publishers to multiply editions, no colporteurs to distribute

them, no shops where they could be kept on sale. The living voice was still the medium of communication. Moses "spake" to the people the words that Jehovah spake to him.

Moses spake and wrote.

And when he stood in the shadow of Mt. Nebo, and knew that his voice was soon to be silenced by death, it sounded forth again, more eloquent and thrilling than ever, in those great orations in which he gave his dying charge to his people. He wrote, or caused to be written, the words of the law, and delivered it to the priests and elders, who were directed to give it by word of mouth to the people. This oral repetition of the law from consecrated lips was made one of the appointed services at the annual feast of tabernacles in the sabbatic year.*

The sublime poems that close the book of Deuteronomy were chanted by Moses, as a solemn death-song, in the hearing of the people. He bids the people themselves take up the message and pass it on, in endless repetitions to those who were to come after them. "And these words, which I command thee this day," he says,

* Deut. 31: 11–13.

"shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." *

Thus their whole life was to be an embodiment and expression of the word of God. The transmission of that word, that is the making of it a tradition, was to be the business not of the priests and the prophets only, but of the whole church, which in this case was the whole nation. The method was still chiefly oral; the most important sphere of instruction was the family, and the relation of which it availed itself, and to which it lent sacredness and dignity, was that of parent and child.

Oral method.

This method is according to the accepted principles of pedagogical science, that is, according to the known principles of the human mind, and is suited to people of all ages and all degrees of culture. It has had a large place in the literature of every nation, ancient and modern. The national chronicles were recited in prose or sung in

* Deut. 6:6–9.

song. The great epics were chanted, either by their authors or by wandering minstrels. The great schools of antiquity were for oral instruction. The great teachers were those who, like Aristotle, Socrates and Plato, could talk instructively and convincingly, and inspire their disciples to do the same.

The world has not yet outgrown this preference for the oral method. To every other quality of subject, thought or style, the voice adds a charm all its own. Hence our enjoyment of oratory, of the drama, of the lecture, of the sermon, and even of productions which though read silently, are so suited to oral delivery, that in imagination we hear in them the sound of the speaker's voice.

Now the Scriptures make large use of this method. The prophets are not merely authors, leaving us certain writings for our instruction and edification. They are living men. We see them. We hear them. It is usual to classify them as speaking prophets and writing prophets, the latter being those who have, and the former those who have not, contributed to the volume of written Scripture. But in reality they were all speaking prophets.

The majority of them, and the greatest of them, were preachers, who, like Moses, their great prototype, delivered their stirring messages in person, and in spoken form. It was the *lips* of Isaiah that were touched with the coal from the heavenly altar. Jeremiah was bidden to "go and say" God's words to the people. Ezekiel was sent to "speak" his message. This was the habitual attitude of the Old Testament prophets. And it is this that gives to their utterances the resonance, the eloquence, the magnetism of an inspired oratory that appeals to us to-day, as it did to their contemporaries ages ago. It individualizes the men themselves. They do not lose their identity in the traits of a common type. Each man stands out by himself, a living and vivid personality, speaking God's message, but in his own voice.

We note the same personal quality in all Scripture; in the Psalms, many of which are prophecies; in the Proverbs, which embody the thought and experience of generations of real people; in romantic sketches, like Ruth and Esther; in dramatic dialogue, like Job or the Song of Songs.

Everywhere the figures of living men and women stand out before us. Everywhere we hear living voices; and through all, deeper than all, grander, more appealing, more thrilling, the majestic voice of God.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLDEST STORY IN THE WORLD.

The first four stories of Genesis—the story of creation, the story of Eden, the story of the two brothers, and the story of the flood—may well be called the four pillars of history. They exhibit and illustrate the fundamental relations upon which all history has rested, and will rest to the end of time—the relation of God to the world, the relation of man to God, the relation of man to his fellow men, and the relation of moral character to individual and national destiny.

They all belong to the era of primeval history. And if we are right in believing that God did not leave man for thousands of years without any knowledge of the facts which these stories involve, they constitute a part, and the most essential and enduring part, of that fascinating literature of oral tradition referred to in a previous chapter.

Corrupted traditions.

They also illustrate the difference there pointed out between traditions preserved and transmitted by God-fearing men, in connection with the true religion, and under providential direction, and the same traditions corrupted and distorted by association with degraded races and pagan faiths. Until after the flood these stories were the common possession of mankind. And when, after the great dispersion recorded in the tenth chapter of Genesis, and corroborated by scientific ethnology, they were carried by the scattered races from land to land and from continent to continent over the whole earth, they survived in various forms age after age, in the literatures of all the cultured nations, and in the folk-lore of savage tribes. But they were debased and paganized. Their original beauty and consistency was changed into forms of grotesque absurdity. Worst of all, they lost the most essential element of all that they originally possessed, their deep spiritual significance.

In the keeping of the people of God, on the other hand, and under the influence of the system of truth which they held, the stories preserved not only their former integrity, but their power of moral impres-

sion. The story itself was in every case subordinated to the lesson it conveyed.

God and the world.

The Relation of God to the World is the first and most conspicuous fact taught by the story of creation.

In front of the second-story office windows of a noted infidel paper, in one of our great American cities, stands the statue of Gutenberg, the reputed inventor of printing. It is a fit figure to adorn the shop and the sanctum of a journalist. It is strangely unfit to be associated with the journalism of unbelief. In his hand he holds a scroll, on which is inscribed the first sentence of the first book he printed—the Latin Bible: "*In principio Deus creavit cœlum et terram,*" which our English Bible renders "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" The sublimest sentence ever written in any book in any language under heaven. It is the story of the ages in ten words. And such words! Time, Deity, creation, a universe! No wonder that the human creator holds them up in reverent silence, as a tribute to the divine, as a stern contradiction of the atheistic press that thunders behind him, as a solemn appeal to the unthinking

babel that roars and surges beneath and around him.

The profoundest scholars and the most devout readers of the Bible differ widely as to the manner in which the creation-story was given to man, whose life touches it only at its very end. Was it dictated verbally to Moses? Was it flashed before him in a splendid vision? Was it framed by his inspired mind out of preëxisting material? Was it the work of some other prophet or historian? Each of these suppositions has the support of zealous advocates, strong argument and a voluminous literature. But no one of them can be proved. The Bible itself does not settle the question, and no decisive answer to it comes from other sources. Evidently God did not deem it important to the main purposes of revelation. But somehow, in his providence, the story made its way down the stream of primitive tradition, and became the starting point of sacred history. The distorted forms in which it appears in pagan myths and legends only serve to show the beauty of the authentic story.

"*In the beginning.*" When was that? Prima facie interpretation dates the creation of man at four thousand years before

Christ. Conservative scholarship moves the date backward fourteen hundred years. Speculative criticism makes it twenty thousand years. Paleontology, with its stone-hatchets and its cave-dwellers' skulls, multiplies the figure by ten. Evolutionism carries it from thousands to millions. Geology, turning the pages of the great earth-folio, finds the record of incomputable ages before human life began. Inductive science reads the story backward still into vast incomputable epochs, when the star-mist floated in space, and suns and planets dropped from the fiery cloud. What matters it? That is not the beginning. Read backward still. Beyond the star-mist, what? Beyond chaos, what? The beginning. And in the beginning, God.

Creation.

"God created." What is that? He has not told us. But somehow, in that remote beginning, in obedience to his sovereign will, things that had not been, began to be. He spoke creative mandates. He brought light out of darkness, form out of formlessness, order out of chaos. He called, and suns and stars came, and systems and universes, laws, motions, attractions, affinities. His life touched the new-made earth, thrilling it through and through, till

life-forms sprang into being everywhere, meadows and forests and blossoming flowers, and myriads of living things, swimming, creeping, flying, running, and filling the world with motion and sound. And finally, as the climax of the creative work, and the end for which the rest was but an elaborate preparation, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

How did God create? He has not told us. Let science tell us if it can. We have no quarrel with it, no jealousy of it. We long ago ceased talking about the conflict between science and religion. There is no such conflict. There is, instead, a wonderful agreement and harmony. That is the marvel of it, the miracle of it. The first chapter of Genesis was written thousands of years before the first chapter of geology; but the two records agree. No fact that rests on a sound scientific basis was ever contradicted by revelation. No genuine biblical truth was ever overthrown by genuine science. Truth is one, and God is its author, and he will not contradict himself.

Science and Genesis.

The cry of heresy has often been raised against scientific deductions hastily as-

sumed to be contrary to Scripture. The Copernican theory, the nebular hypothesis, and the teachings of geology have each in turn been denounced as unbiblical. But they have lived down the accusation, and the Christian world has retracted it. The creation-story, instead of being incompatible with these deductions, is now seen to have anticipated them, writing them into the first chapter of Genesis long before they had dawned upon the uninspired mind. The order of creation as there outlined is substantially that given in the more ancient records which the mountains keep, graven on their tables of stone.

"*The heavens.*" It is science that has interpreted that great word to us. The solid dome that made the sky of primitive man, and the concentric spheres, sliding and singing above the heads of later generations, science has dissolved into immeasurable space, stretching away in every direction by distances that stagger the imagination. The sun that used to move around the earth has become a great luminous center around which the earth and its sister worlds revolve, though we still use the language of appearance, just as the Bible does, just as the astronomer himself

does, and say that the sun rises and sets. The tiny points of light, that used to be equidistant and only a little way overhead, are changed into mighty suns, and pushed back into space, where there are millions of millions of them, millions of millions of miles asunder. The filmy patches of light in the nebulæ and the milky way have resolved themselves into other millions of stars. And all this maze of worlds is in motion, world around world, system around system, stars and suns flashing hither and thither through space at inconceivable velocity, yet in faultless order and harmony, every invisible orbit mathematically drawn, every motion under perfect control, mass balanced against mass and force against force; no collisions; no arrivals behind time, or ahead of it. Such are the heavens that God created.

"*And the earth.*" Here the chief wonders of creation are in the realm of life. Life itself is the greatest wonder of all, and the greatest mystery. It is also the occasion of the greatest controversy of modern times concerning the bearing of scientific truth upon biblical interpretation. The evolution theory, to which science is committed, has like those of astronomy and

geology, been denounced as essentially unbiblical. But like them it is living down the accusation. It is not yet a finished theory, but is itself undergoing a process of evolution and reconstruction, not at the hands of its opponents, if it has any, but at the hands of its friends. When it shall have been perfectly adjusted to the facts of biology, it will be found to be also in entire harmony with the truths of theology. It does not dispense with God. It does not deny or belittle the work of creation. It is merely a theory of the *method* of creation. The method it contends for is the most complicated and the most difficult conceivable; but it is not too difficult for God. It is a very slow method; but "God has much time."

The question of method is, after all, of secondary importance. The great cardinal fact of creation overshadows everything else. To that we come back from every excursion. Like the grim old printer of Mayence, we lift up, against the skepticism of the unbelieving and the godless tumult of the unthinking, that sublime and unassailable declaration,

"IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH."

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF EDEN.

This too, like the story of creation, has both its speculative and its practical aspects. Our point of view restricts us to the practical. The discussion of the dual documents, Jehovistic and Eloistic, earlier and later, and of the vague and elusive boundary between history and parable, is legitimate and interesting. For those who would pursue it an ample literature is provided. But our present line of study leads us in another direction. The aspect of the Eden story in which it looms up with a grandeur and a meaning that make all merely literary questions seem trivial, is the moral and spiritual. What does the old story teach us about the superb being with whom creation culminated? and what does it teach us concerning our own position and destiny?

Elaborate preparation had been made for him. God had been a long time pre- Eden.

paring a home for him. A great procession of events, marching on through millions of years, was ever moving toward this point. The shaping of chaotic matter into a world, the fitting of that world into a complex system, the provision of a lighting-apparatus for it, and self-adjusting water-works, the walling in of oceans, the upheaval of continents, the building of mountains, the starting of rivers and cataracts and ocean tides, the storing up of fuel for future fires, of iron for future plows and axes and watch-springs and steamships, of gold and silver and copper for coinage, of pearls and diamonds and rubies and sapphires for ornament, the clothing of the earth with beauty, the rearing of forests, the provision of things to eat and things to wear and innumerable things to see and hear and enjoy,—all this and more the Creator did to prepare for his yet unborn children a fitting home.

How patiently he wrought at this cherished task! What thought, what wealth of resources, what painstaking handiwork he lavished upon it! He was at the same time building many other worlds, perhaps for other races of beings, created or to be created. But for such a world and such a

race as ours, this preparation was surely marvelous. With what joy he must have wrought at it! and with what satisfaction must he have seen it grow into form and beauty beneath his hand!

A superb distinction was conferred upon man. "In the image of God created he him." One of the finest delights of rational beings is that of self-expression. Creation is the self-expression of God. In it and through it he reveals his nature and his character. "The heavens declare the glory of God." So does the earth. So does every bird that sings and every flower that blooms. But he wanted some finer expression of himself, something that would more perfectly reflect his mind and heart, something upon which his love might overflow, and from which an answering love might respond, some being of such godlike faculty and susceptibility as would stamp him with the very image and proclaim him as the very child of God. This high distinction, this mark of divine heredity, he put upon man. **Man.**

The duality of human life appears at the outset. "Male and female created he them." He would not doom man to solitude. Life lacked its symmetry, its **Woman.**

unity, its perfectness, until there came into it the union of two hearts, the adjustment and proportionment of two natures, each the complement of the other, and made place in their mutual love for the safe sheltering and nurture of the incipient life that was to be. Notice how unmistakable is the plan of the family as here revealed—the union of one man and one woman, and how naively their equality of position, rights, influence and responsibility is taken for granted.

Godlike nature.

A moral nature was conferred upon them. This was itself a godlike attribute, and lifted them immeasurably above all other earthly creatures. The moral nature involves four elements—the power to know what is right and what is wrong, the power to estimate and appreciate the motives which incline one to do or avoid the one or the other, the power to choose and to act in view of those motives, and the moral faculty called conscience, which commends the right and condemns the wrong. The possession of these powers constitutes moral responsibility. The bestowal of this moral nature upon man was a splendid endowment. It made him the arbiter of his own destiny. No power outside of him-

self was permitted to control him. No will but his own could choose for him. He himself, and for himself, must in every case choose or refuse.

Man's dominion.

An imperial position was given him. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Not only was the earth and its contents prepared expressly for them, it was given them upon the express condition that they master it and make use of it. That franchise has never been outlawed or canceled. Under its authority the enterprise of man is still making its conquests over matter and its forces and resources, and the work is only begun. Call the list of modern discoveries and inventions. Listen to the thunder of machinery. Trace the highways of traffic over continents and oceans. Note the swift-wheeled carriages and the flying ships. Follow the path of the captive lightning through the air and under the sea. Measure the farmer's acres, and the bushels of wheat in his granary. Watch the mechanic in his shop and the chemist in his laboratory, and

the great underground army in the mines. Put your ear to the telephone. Read the wireless message. Spread the wings of the air-ship. Surely man is mastering the empire given him in Eden.

Under law. *A Divine Law* was placed over them. That was according to the general plan of the world in which they lived. All things are under divine law. Natural law is the wisdom and beneficence of God working through the best means for the best ends, within the realm of non-voluntary being. Moral law is the wisdom and beneficence of God, within the realm of voluntary being, pointing out the best ends and the best means, and requiring their adoption. Law implies authority and the power to enforce it. Natural law executes itself through the operation of the forces of nature, that is the power of God working in certain established ways. Moral law is enforced by motives among which are the sense of obligation, the reward of obedience and the punishment of disobedience. Obedience is a duty, but not a necessity. Men ought to obey God, but they are not compelled to do so. This was the relation of the first man and the first woman to the divine law.

Temptation is the presentation to a moral being of the motives to wrong-doing. It solicits, allures, misrepresents, teaches contempt of law, sets up false standards, makes false promises, calls evil good and good evil, takes every advantage of a man's nature and tendencies, attacks him where he is weakest and when he is most temptable; but it cannot compel him. No temptation is so strong or so subtile that it cannot be resisted. It is not an excuse for wrong-doing. It does not lessen moral responsibility or accountability. Tested.

Probation is the condition of a moral being subjected to these two sets of motives, and deliberately exercising his power of free choice in view of them. It is a condition inseparable from his moral freedom; and it both tests and develops his moral character. Good and evil are set before him, right and wrong. He must choose, and he must choose for himself. Satan cannot and God will not decide for him.

Sin is choosing and acting in accordance with evil motives. And since all right motives are on the side of the divine law, sin is its transgression.

The Eden story is a concrete illustration of these truths, and a foreshadowing of the

Eden lost.

moral history of the race. Man was created in the image of God. A splendid home was provided for him. A great empire was put under his dominion. He possessed the love and enjoyed the fellowship of God. The divine will was revealed to him, and its behests were commended to him by every worthy consideration. Solicitations to evil allured him in the direction of sin. He yielded, in what seemed a trivial act, but one that had in it the essence of all sin. The inevitable consequences followed—the sting of remorse, the sense of shame, the loss of divine favor, the forfeiture of Eden.

Yet all was not lost. God was not lost. He did not cast off his erring children in the hour when they needed him so much more than ever before. Toil was not lost. Blessed resource and solace in trouble! Sin had embittered it. It was no longer the play of exuberant energy that it had once been. The garden of delights where they had once wrought so happily was forfeited. But their heritage of toil was still left to them. There were still other fields to till, other gardens to dress and keep.

Love was not lost. They still had each other. Though they were driven forth in

shame and bitterness of heart from their beloved Eden, they went together, dividing the burden of grief and doubling the poor remnant of their joy. Hope was not lost. In the hour of their moral defeat and failure God gave them the promise of final retrieve, and the assurance of a coming triumph over the power of evil.

And so, with God, and mutual love, and the solace of labor, and the comfort of hope, chastened and humbled, but not dismayed, they went forth to find a new home and create a new Paradise in the unpeopled earth.

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY OF THE TWO BROTHERS.

In the Eden story we saw the genesis of the social unit, the family. In the story of Cain and Abel we see the social forces at work in their wider relations, and in the actual struggle of life.

Religion is the first of these forces that attracts our attention, and religious character the most prominent and decisive element in the movement of events. Incidentally the story shows us that the fundamental articles of the true faith were still preserved intact. These two young men worship the true God. The rite they use is a simple and natural one, adapted to primitive ideas and conditions, and approved of God. It expresses gratitude and a sense of obligation to him; it recognizes him as the giver of all good, and honors him with the products of the labor he has blessed. Each man offers according to his means. The farmer brings of the fruits of

his fields, and the shepherd of the increase of his flock. So far as the outward forms of religion are concerned, all is well.

Two Brothers.

But all religion is not genuine, and all worship is not acceptable with God. "And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Why? In Cain's opinion, the discrimination was arbitrary and unjust. "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." God did not meet anger with anger, but kindly reasoned with him. "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" God notices a man's state of mind, and the expression of his face. He points out to Cain the defect in his religious service. "If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up?" (A. V. accepted), "and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door." It was the earliest publication of that foundation principle of religion, repeated over and over in later centuries, by Samuel, by David, by Amos, by Isaiah, by Jesus, by holy apostles, that worship is acceptable not according to its form, but according to its genuineness and its sincerity, and according to the extent to which the worshiper yields his life

to the will of the God he worships. The trouble was not with the gift but with the man, because, as John says, "his works were evil and his brother's righteous." Thus early in the history of the race that sad moral cleavage had begun which divided mankind into two great classes. Abel belonged to one class and Cain to another.

First murder.

The First Crime grew directly out of this radical difference in character. In its history we see the nature of the criminal spirit, and study the genesis of the criminal class in human society. Crime is selfishness unrestrained by considerations of duty, virtue or justice. It is always prompted by some evil passion of the human heart, like avarice, or lust, or jealousy, or hate, or anger. For the gratification of this passion the rights, the welfare, the property, the life of another are sacrificed. Cain's crime is typical of crime in general. Its remote cause was jealousy. Jealousy bred hatred; hatred bred violence and brutality. He hated Abel because Abel was a better man than himself. As if the very presence of virtue was an affront to him. For such a reason

as that he destroyed that beautiful life and worse than destroyed his own.

The Law of Accountability now appears in the story. Cain immediately finds that he has sinned not only against his brother, but against the social system to which he belongs, and against the God who ordained it. There is no constable to arrest him, no court to try him, no mob to lynch him, no law by which to define his crime, or even give it a name. But there is a God to see it, and to call the criminal to account for it. He is prosecutor, witness, judge and executioner, all in one, and he immediately takes up the case.

Its punishment.

"And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is thy brother?" Cain answers with a lie and a quibble. "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" To this impertinent denial of both the facts and the law of the case, God makes an answer that not only is an accusation, proof and sentence in the case on trial, but establishes a principle and a precedent for all time. Was Cain his brother's keeper? Of course he was, by virtue of the relation and the opportunity that put the brother in his power. Every man is his brother's keeper to the extent to which his acts involve that

brother's interests. He is the keeper of his brother's life to the extent to which it is at his mercy. He is the keeper of his brother's property, to the extent to which his business transactions or methods affect it. He is the keeper of his brother's happiness, his comfort, his reputation, his morals, his soul. He may repudiate the responsibility, as Cain did, or ignore it or forget it as multitudes do. But God holds him to it; and sooner or later the challenge will come to him, "Where is thy brother?"

The Self-punishment of Sin appears plainly in the story. There was no gallows for Cain, or dungeon, or chain-gang, or penal colony. And none was needed. A heavier penalty overtook him—the hiding of God's face, banishment from respectable society, the perpetual accusation of the blood-stained earth, the reproaches of his own conscience and the haunting fear of the ghastly fate which he had so recklessly inflicted upon another. No wonder that he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." But it was self-inflicted. God had not forsaken him; but he had forsaken God. Men had not ostracised him; but he had rendered himself unfit for virtuous society. The

ground did not know what he had done, nor care; but he had written his own accusation upon it. Death was not on his track, but only the specter conjured up by his evil conscience.

Ah, if he could only undo the work of that one passionate moment! If he could only bring back the sweet life he had destroyed! But it was as easy to create worlds as to do that. Poor fellow! We cannot but pity him, and hope that he found mercy and pardon in a pitiful heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD.

Of all the genesis stories that became the common property of the race, and which were carried to the ends of the earth on the tides of migration, the most widely distributed, the most accurately preserved and the most tenaciously held is that of the deluge. It is found in the literatures of Persia, China, India, Arabia, Armenia, Syria, Greece, Scandinavia, on the coins of ancient Phrygia, in the legends and in the art of the Aztecs and other Mexican races, and in the oral traditions of a multitude of barbarous peoples, including the North American Indians and the inhabitants of some of the Pacific islands.

We need not wonder at that wide diffusion of the story, considering the magnitude of the catastrophe it describes, its dramatic features, its relation to all mankind, and its nearness in time to the great dispersion that followed it. But it is not

only an interesting study in world-wide tradition; it is of inestimable value as evidence of the truth of the story itself, and of the correctness of the Scripture representation of the unity of the human family.

Flood traditions.

Like the earlier stories of the series, it became corrupted by association with degenerate races, and the infusion of pagan ideas. In some cases it was confused with the story of creation, or that of the fall. Everywhere it took on local color. Tribal heroes were substituted for Noah, and the gods of the people for Jehovah. It is gratifying to see, however, to what an extent the essential features of the story were preserved, and how the various corrupted editions corrected and supplemented one another, and with an item here and an item there, presented not exactly a consensus, but an aggregate of profane tradition, that strikingly corroborates the biblical account. Thus the flood is represented to have been a punishment for sin; it was divinely predicted; one good man and his family were saved in a boat, ship or box; certain animals and birds went in with them; all other life was destroyed; the ship was at last

stranded on a mountain; bird-messengers were sent out; the waters subsided; the occupants of the boat came forth; sacrifices were offered; the gods promised not to send another flood, etc.

The most elaborate of these traditions, and the one most closely resembling the biblical account, is the Chaldean. An Assyrian version of it found in the great clay-tablet library of king Assurbanipal's palace at Nineveh, has been made familiar to Bible students through Mr. George Smith's translation. It is of course adjusted to the Chaldean mythology, with its multitude of gods and demigods; but the main incidents of the story are identical with those of Genesis. This is precisely what we might expect in a version produced and preserved within the probable limits of the territory submerged by the flood, within two hundred and fifty miles of Mount Ararat, and practically at the great ethnic center from which the dispersion of the nations took place.

Biblical story.

But the superiority of the biblical version is as striking as the origin of the non-biblical ones is evident. Like the creation story, it has its twofold documentary basis, marked by that combination of agree-

ment as to essential facts and variation as to non-essential details, which are the accepted sign of individuality, honesty and truth. Like the older stories, it has survived the assaults of hostile skepticism, the scrutiny of impartial criticism, and the embarrassment of zealous misinterpretation. Again has science, at first mistaken for an enemy, proved itself the staunchest of friends. Truth was not divided against itself. Science and religion have come together, not by compromise, but by the discovery of a common ground, in a clearer knowledge and a more rational faith. The geologist affirms that the earth's crust has been and still is subject to local depressions and elevations, which under certain conditions, would produce precisely such an inundation and subsequent recession of waters as is here described. He also informs us that such a catastrophe is actually recorded in the geological strata of the Euphrates valley. The theologian admits that all the requirements both of the biblical description and of the event are met by such an inundation of the limited region then populated. Thus, as Bacon tells us, "a little knowl-

edge tendeth to skepticism; but large learning leadeth round to faith again."

The real significance of the story, however, like that of those before it, is not literary or scientific, but ethical. It teaches us that God rules the world with primary reference to the higher and larger interests of man, and that physical forces and physical laws and physical phenomena are a part of the system by which he promotes those interests. It teaches us that masses and races, as well as individuals, may become so bad that it is better and more merciful to destroy them than to keep them alive, to consign them to death all at once than one at a time. It teaches us that no age can be so corrupt and no environment so bad but that a man, with the grace of God, can stand up, clean and true, though he stand alone, "a righteous man," "perfect in his generation." It shows us that God knows what is worth saving, and by what means to save it, and how to make storm and flood and ruinous calamity his agents of mercy to his children. He knows how to pick out the man he needs to begin a new epoch, and become the progenitor of a new race.

At last the great catastrophe is over.

New race.

The storm has ceased. The rainbow has hung its sign of mercy across the sky. The waters have subsided. The ground is dry. From a big, weather-beaten old house-boat, stranded on a mountain plateau, in northern Armenia, emerges a family of eight persons, four men and four women, sole survivors of the antediluvian world. Animals and birds come forth with them, and scatter hither and thither in the gladness of a new-found freedom. Around them rise the white peaks of Ararat. Below them stretch plains and valleys, where gleaming rivers are making their way toward the sea. There, too, run the streams of human destiny. On the banks of those rivers great cities are to be built, and great empires are to be founded. And to this old man and his household is assigned the honor and the responsibility of inaugurating the new era. Watch them!

They are not all that has been saved from the general ruin. With them have survived the two most essential elements of civilization—the divinely-ordained social unit, the *family* preserved in its original integrity, one man united to one woman, and *the true religion,* the worship

and service of the great Jehovah, and the recognition of his sovereignty, providence and beneficence in human life.

One thing more was saved, of inestimable value to them and their descendants. It *was the antediluvian Bible,* those four brief chapters of primitive tradition—the story of creation, the story of Eden, the story of the two brothers and the outline genealogy of preceding generations—all that God thought worth saving from antediluvian history, as Noah and his family were all that he thought worth saving from the antediluvian race. To this they were now able of their own knowledge to add a new chapter—the Story of the Deluge.

Thus gradually and naturally the volume of sacred history grew, keeping pace with the facts and events it recorded, and being preserved from corruption by the testimony of godly men and the saving influence of the true faith.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAKING OF A NATION.

FEW people count the genealogical tables of the Bible among its attractions. The tenth chapter of Genesis, for instance, is probably skipped by most readers. But, rightly appreciated, it is one of the most interesting chapters in the Old Testament.

The Great Dispersion is brought before us as in a bird's-eye view. We see the distribution of the descendants of the three sons of Noah, forming the three great divisions of the human race. We see the children of Japhet spreading to the north, northeast and northwest; those of Ham to the south, southeast and southwest, and those of Shem remaining in and near their original home in west-central Asia. Ethnology, studying the matter from a purely scientific point of view, finds the same threefold division, and the same scheme of distribution. Babel.

Peculiarities of physique, temperament and propensity distinguish the three races

from each other. Each develops its own group of languages, and produces its own type of civilization. To each of them God appoints an important work in the economy of the world. The Japhethites are the adventurers, the explorers, the pioneers, pushing out in bold migrations into unknown lands. The Hamites are the great builders, masters of material fact and material things, rearing stupendous temples, palaces, pyramids, sphinxes. The Semites are dreamers, reflective, imaginative, speculative, serious-minded, and withal religious.

Hebrews. *The Semites are chosen* of God as the people through whom he will propagate the true religion on the earth. How long the descendants of Noah remained loyal to the worship of Jehovah we cannot tell. Too soon we find its truth and its worship corrupted, even in ancient Chaldea, the earliest center of Semitic civilization. In place of the one God whom their father worshiped, there arises a pantheon of separate divinities, gods of the sun and the moon, gods of the air, the river and the earth, good gods and bad gods, strong gods and weak gods, rivaling each other, op-

posing each other, deifying the powers of nature and the passions of men.

The process of selection and elimination is again resorted to, as the means of preserving the true faith. From the descendants of Shem God selects Eber, to whom the Hebrew race is indebted for its name.

From the descendants of Eber he selects the family of Terah in "Ur of the Chaldees," separates them from their idolatrous neighbors, moves them six hundred miles northward, and establishes them as an independent tribe in Haran. Out of the family of Terah he selects Abram and his household, separates them from their kindred, moves them four hundred miles to the southwest, and settles them among the Hamitic tribes in Canaan. Next he separates Abraham from Lot, enters into covenant with him, gives him a new name, also wealth, influence and power, shifts him to and fro as a stranger in a strange land, develops his character, tests his faith by tragic ordeals, endues him with prophetic insight and foretells the destiny of his descendants. Of Abram's sons Isaac is chosen, a child of promise, a man of pure character, meditative, devout, in-

heriting his father's position and estate and his priestly and prophetic functions. Of Isaac's sons Jacob is chosen, a shrewd and capable man, but deficient in character, the victim of unhappy blunders, parental and personal, and suffering much of the discipline of trouble, chiefly of his own making. He is, nevertheless, true to the religious traditions of his fathers, and is set apart by Jehovah to be the father and the founder of the destined nation.

Patriarchal life has much in it that is picturesque and romantic. It appeals powerfully to the imagination of modern occidentals, and has furnished many fine subjects for poetry and art. It was, however, a rather prosaic life, after all, full of toil and hardship, and often of danger. But it served an important purpose in the times of which we are studying, especially in the lives of the three great patriarchs. The free, out-of-door life, the close fellowship with nature, the isolation from artificial surroundings, the conservatism and respect for usage, the sense of responsibility forced upon the patriarch by his almost regal position, and his habit of prayer and of waiting on God, kept his heart loyal and his faith sound.

Nation-making now begins in earnest. The time for elimination is past, and the time for multiplication and aggregation has come. Of the sons of Jacob, not one but all are chosen—the twelve foundations of the coming commonwealth of Israel. The material is crude and full of defects, but God knows how to prepare it for his uses.

The Egyptian exile is one of his means of national education. For more than two hundred years he keeps the Hebrews in contact with the culture of the most learned people on the face of the earth, the arts of the most skilful, the civilization of the most progressive. They meet all sorts and conditions of men, from peasants to princes. They pass through all social grades, from that of the king's favorite to that of the slave's slave. They are honored and they are abused. They feast and they starve. They read books and they make bricks. But it is all a part of the educational process through which God is shaping the nation, and preparing it for its destiny. Hebrew bondage.

The Great Emancipation is the next step in this process. All that Egyptian civilization can do for them, and all that Freedom.

personal discipline can do under present conditions, has been done. The threescore and ten Hebrews that came into Egypt in Joseph's time have become two millions. They have mastered the arts and the industries, the science and the literature, the military strategy and the political system of their masters. There are those among them who are qualified for the highest positions in peace or in war, in civil life or in the service of religion.

Moses as leader.

A Great Leader has been specially prepared for them by such a training as no other man ever received. Forty years in the palaces and schools and libraries of Egypt in contact with princes, courtiers, scholars and priests, and with access to every class and every department of Egyptian life. Forty years among the tents and herds of Midian, spying out the secrets of the wilderness, learning every desert path and mountain trail, every spring and pasture-patch, every berry and fruit, every peril and every resource, and learning the wonderful art of living and keeping others alive under such conditions. These are years of meditation, of communion with nature and with heaven, developing the spiritual faculties, learning to

know the voice of God and to obey it, and taking on those traits that make him the stately and masterful moral giant that he is. The vision of the burning bush, the reception of the divine commission, the providential meeting with his brother Aaron in the wilderness, the series of miracles before Pharaoh, the final triumph of the weak over the strong, the oppressed over the oppressor, give such a man no shock of surprise. It is precisely what is to be expected of God, as Moses knows him.

A Prepared People are ready for the approaching crisis in their history, though as yet they are not aware of its coming. Egypt has become hateful to them, and their life as bondmen intolerable. But discontent is by no means the only feeling to which Moses can appeal. There are two things which neither the prosperity of the earlier period nor the hardships of the later have extinguished in their hearts. One is their *love of race.* That principle of exclusiveness that has been bred in them for centuries has become an indestructible part of their nature, an instinct which nothing can eradicate. After two hundred years and more in Egypt, they are still

Hebrews and not Egyptians, preserving not only their national traits and sentiments, but even their tribal organization. Even Moses, though an Egyptian prince by adoption, breathing from infancy the atmosphere of Egyptian courts and temples, remains a Hebrew at heart, heroically loyal, risking everything in his zeal to avenge their wrongs.

Religion of Jehovah.

The other thing that survives all the changes in their condition is *their religion.* True, it does not wholly escape contamination. The elaborate religious system of the Egyptians, with its arrogant priesthood and its stately ceremonials, makes an impression upon many minds, as subsequent events prove, but only so far as it is conceived to be compatible with the Hebrew faith. The two religions really have many things in common: such as the immortality of the soul, moral accountability, retribution, etc. But while the Hebrew finds some common ground with the Egyptian, he never for a moment thinks of renouncing the faith of his fathers. And when Moses comes to them with a message from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though they are slow to

respond to the message, they bow in reverence to him who sends it.

A dramatic and thrilling story is that of the Great Emancipation. It is in fact a prose epic, having its hero, its plot, its sublime purpose, its masterful action, its steady, intelligent, unrelenting movement toward a grand climax. In it we see a contest more stupendous than any waged on any battlefield of any campaign in the annals of time; a contest between the the mightiest ruler on earth and the almighty God. The Hebrew nation is enclosed within the Egyptian, and held fast in the grasp of a relentless tyranny. It is a nation of slaves, whose serfdom has long been a part of the social system of the land, and the very machinery and motive-power of its industry. Egypt is full of tombs, temples, palaces and cities which have been reared by their labor, and into which the tears and blood and lives of scores of thousands have been built, during the sixty-seven cruel years of their great oppressor, Rameses II. His son and successor, Menephtah, the reigning Pharaoh, inherits these slaves as a part of his royal estate, a possession to be taken for granted, like the Nile and the Delta and the sea.

The idea of giving them up, of freeing them, of trying to carry on the industrial enterprises of his kingdom without them, is inconceivable to him.

Yet, that is precisely what God proposes to bring to pass. He has determined to take that entire people, men, women and children, out of Egypt, not only under the eyes of Pharaoh, but with his free consent.

Pharaoh.

The Opening Message from God gives the key-note of the coming contest. "LET MY PEOPLE GO." *His* people, not Pharaoh's. Thus does he with a single word abrogate Pharaoh's jurisdiction and assert his own, not over the Israelites only, but over the Egyptians themselves.

The tyrant's reply is equally explicit and characteristic, and in his intention final. Looking down contemptuously upon the two old men who have dared make such a demand of him, and whose immunity from instant execution is one of the miracles of the story, he answers, "Who is Jehovah, that I should . . . let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, and . . . . I will not let Israel go." Then, dismissing his presumptuous visitors, he gives orders not for the release or relief of his bondmen, but for their more cruel oppression.

The scenes that follow are not more wonderful as displays of divine power, than as revelations of the divine character. That mandate which so startled and offended the king, rings through the palace in daily repetition. "Let my people go! Let my people go!" That Jehovah whom Pharaoh did not know, makes himself known; not vengefully, not in indignant fury, not in the instant destruction of his enemies, but patiently, slowly, little by little, with the dignity and self-restraint of conscious power; first by miracles of surprise, then by miracles of omnipotence, and finally, when all else fails, by miracles of calamity and judgment, growing more and more terrible to their tragic end.

But the most important effect of this series of divine wonders is not that upon Pharaoh, but that upon the Israelites themselves. It is another step in their education. Nothing less striking than this would arouse them from the lethargy of despair, convince them of the divine authority of Moses, unite and consolidate them under his leadership, give them faith in God's promises and in their own destiny, awaken their patriotism, their enthusiasm, their power of initiative, and

prepare them to make prompt response when the final word of command shall come.

Great deliverance.

It comes at last, and it comes from Pharaoh himself, rising up at midnight to find his first-born dead, and the cry of all Egypt wailing in his ears. The man who once said, "I will not let Israel go," now cries, "Rise up, get you forth from among my people." His subjects also join in the impassioned outcry, and "are urgent upon the people to send them out of the land in haste." That is what God has expected and planned for. He also foresees that Pharaoh will regret the order, and will attempt to stop the departure of the Israelites; and he knows precisely what he will do in that case. He has another lesson to teach both to his own people and to their oppressor. He makes no haste to get the great unwieldy host out of danger. He marches and countermarches them back and forth for three days on Egyptian territory, till Pharaoh has time to assemble his army and overtake them where escape seems to be impossible. Then his east wind blows, the sea rolls back, the word of march is given, the cloud of his presence comes between

pursuer and pursued, his people pass over dry-shod, and the returning tide sweeps in again. The Great Emancipation is complete. On the two shores of the sea stand two men representing the two forces in the conflict just closed. On the western shore great Pharaoh, baffled, defeated, his indispensable industrial forces gone forever, his splendid chariot-legion in the bottom of the sea. On the eastern shore, Moses, with the staff of God in his hand, and the ransomed nation around him, leading the great chorus in the song of triumph and praise.

But, as in the case of previous miracles, so in this, the most valuable result is spiritual—the reverence and faith it creates, the reality it gives to the being and power of God, the confidence it inspires in the teachings of authentic revelation. And the people "saw the great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared Jehovah: and they believed in Jehovah, and in his servant Moses."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCHOOL IN THE DESERT.

The Wanderings, location of.

THE Red Sea was to the Israelites not only a geographical barrier between the land of bondage and the land of freedom; it was the boundary between the two epochs in the training of the nation. The location of this desert-school is a point upon which scholars are not agreed. The prevalent view, which assigns it to the Sinaitic peninsula, that safely-enclosed triangle bounded by the Mediterranean and the Land of Canaan on the north, the mountains of Edom and the Gulf of Akabah on the east, and the Gulf of Suez and the great Egyptian wall on the west, is strenuously but not conclusively disputed, chiefly because that region was at the time under Egyptian jurisdiction, and therefore unsafe ground for the escaping nation. But wherever it was, the providential preparation for their sojourn in it is striking and complete. They were, at any rate, in a

region where, after a single battle with a local tribe, they were for forty years entirely undisturbed. They were under the leadership of a man who, thanks to his forty years of special training, was familiar with the topography and the resources of the country, and with the conditions, the requirements and the methods of nomadic life. And most important of all from an educational point of view, although the land yielded not a little in the way of sustenance for man and beast, it did not yield enough; so that they were continually dependent upon the special interposition of God, and could not live a single day without it.

Miracles.

Miracles, therefore, were among the commonest incidents of life with them, so common, indeed, that they almost ceased to be miracles. Nothing was more familiar to an Israelite. Nothing was easier for him to believe. The modern skepticism that pronounces miracles incredible, and the timid exegesis that laboriously explains them away, in the effort to "make it easy for God," had never entered the Hebrew mind. That the power which made the sea, and set its bounds, and kept its great pendulous tides swinging for ages, could

brush back a few feet of water from a shoal; that he who provided food for every living thing, through the complicated processes of germination and growth, gathering its nutritive elements atom by atom from the air and the soil, should know a simpler and a quicker way to bring it within the reach of hungry men; that he who hollowed out the great rock caverns, and filled them from the mountain springs, should open one or two upon occasion, to quench the thirst of the perishing; that he who created all the birds that fly and taught them every secret they know of wing and nest and changing seasons, should be able to gather a special flock of quail together for a camp dinner—what was there to be surprised at in all this?

Yet, miracles are not primarily mere expedients for meeting emergencies. There is always in them a moral purpose that infinitely outweighs the material. The religion which had been flaunted before the eyes of the Hebrews in Egypt was spectacular; and something spectacular was needed to make their own religion seem real and impressive. The gods of the Egyptians were abstractions embodied in the powers and personified by the objects

of nature; and it was through such manifestations that Jehovah made himself a reality to the children of Israel, and came close to them in vital contact with their daily interests and life.

The notable year in this period of Hebrew history was the year at Sinai. It was a year of instruction and organization. The institutions that gave the nation its cohesion, its unity and its distinction were then developed.

The most vital institution of all was that of religion. It began with the foundation principles of right living, as laid down in the Ten Commandments. They were not new principles. The reasons for them lie in the nature of God and the nature of man. They had been in force since the creation of man. But they were now freshly formulated, codified, and published. They constitute the most remarkable summary of human duty ever put into words. They require reverence and fealty toward the one God, the setting apart of stated times in remembrance of him, the observance of filial obligation, respect for life, for property rights, for purity of life and for truth, and the suppression of unlawful desire. They do not

constitute a creed. They do not express truth in propositions. They do not contain all truth. God had much more to reveal to men through the law, the prophets and the gospel. But so much as is here laid down is primary, essential and permanent. Jesus, twelve or fifteen centuries later, reaffirmed it, put it into his own system of ethics, and declared it more enduring than the earth and the stars.* Forms and methods are temporary and changeable; but principles of life are immutable. God does not trifle with those principles. He does not state them carelessly or needlessly; and when he issues a great moral imperative, he never takes it back.

Law given.

Law is a necessity to a moral being. It furnishes him the standard by which to measure himself, and the ideal toward which he is to strive. It defines obligation. It divides right from wrong. It tests the soundness of a man's conscience and the rectitude of his purpose. It is not only compatible with his moral freedom, but a condition of it. It was a necessity to the innocent on probation in the garden of Eden. It was a far greater necessity to

* Matt. 5:18.

the Israelite under training in the School of the Desert.

A spectacular religion was not a necessity in Eden, and would have been absurdly out of place there. But it was indispensable to the Israelite at this stage of his spiritual education. As he needed visible miracles to give reality to God, so he needed the visible tabernacle, the pillar of fire, the smoking altar, the fragrant incense, the splendid vestments of the priests, to give reality to his faith. The incident of the golden calf showed how pitiably unprepared he was for a religion of invisible things, and what an imperative want of his nature was met by the elaborate ceremonial for which Moses was at that very moment receiving minute instruction in the mount.

The Sabbath.

The Sabbatic System was a further aid in keeping religion before the eyes of the people—one day in seven to rest the body; one year in seven as a respite for the hard-worked soil; one year in fifty to restore the social equilibrium, and sound the jubilee of freedom; the passover feast to commemorate the Great Emancipation; the feast of pentecost to praise God for the approaching harvest; the feast of taber-

nacles, the great national camp-meeting, in thanksgiving for the harvest past; the sin offering, the trespass offering, the burnt offering, the bread offering, the peace offering, the scapegoat. Religion was a perpetual pageant, passing before the eyes of the people; but it was a beautiful, a splendid pageant, free from the grotesque features which mark the pageants of heathenism, and calculated in every detail to promote reverence, devotion and faith.

Great Truths underlay all that spectacular worship. It was more, infinitely more, than a pageant. It made religion the chief business of life. All other interests were subordinated to it. The tabernacle was the most magnificent sanctuary they could construct, and was placed at the center of the camp, as religion itself was the center of the Hebrew life. Its furniture and draperies were of the most costly material, and were fashioned in the highest style of existing art. The greatest and most versatile art-genius of his time was specially inspired to produce them. Thus early did art find its finest expression in the service of religion. One whole tribe was consecrated to that service, and every man was called upon to make large contri-

butions of time and money for its support. The holiness of God and the demand for holiness in man were symbolized by spotless robes, and frequent washings, and distinctions between clean and unclean acts, states and things. Sin was symbolized by suffering, and by the sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty.

A wonderful Religion was that of the Hebrews; and though it was designed for a special dispensation, and was so constructed that, when it was no longer needed, it ceased by a law of limitation within itself, yet the ideas that underlay it endured, and still endure, and are a part of that imperishable substance of the old law which our Lord said he came not to destroy but to fulfil. **Religion.**

The Civil Policy of the Hebrews shows a similar combination of temporary form with perpetual principles, and the same central and controlling power of religion. The Hebrew commonwealth was based to a certain extent upon the patriarchal and tribal system, which as we have seen, was one of the remarkable survivals of the Egyptian exile. All the complicated genealogies of the people were preserved. Every man knew from which of the sons of Jacob **Polity.**

he was descended, and could trace his hereditary line backward, from ancestor to ancestor, to its original source. The nation therefore spontaneously divided itself into tribes, and the tribes into families and subfamilies, each tribe and each family having its recognized head, and a certain measure of independence, while all were subject in their wider relations to the national leader and to the requirements of the general welfare. It is doing no violence to terms to call them the United States of Israel. Of this compact and efficient system the great camp, arranged as methodically as that of a modern army, was a visible representation.

Jurisprudence.

Hebrew Jurisprudence was an application to specific persons and circumstances of the principles of the decalogue. It embraced such matters as sanitation, personal virtue, truthfulness, honesty, justice, impartiality, the social relations, respect for age and for authority, care for the poor, the treatment of strangers, etc. These features of the Mosaic code were not then introduced for the first time to the attention of men. Like the decalogue, they rested on principles as old as human society, principles which had been more or

less distinctly recognized in the Egyptian and the Babylonian codes, and no doubt to some extent by men in more primitive states of society. But the Hebrew code is unique in being based, not upon expediency, but upon religious obligation, in being identified with the true faith, and in being enjoined and propagated by direct command of God. Modern jurists have expressed the highest admiration for this system, not only as adapted to the needs of that time, and that people, but as an embodiment of principles that are sound and practical everywhere and for all time.

Training in desert.

The discipline of the desert school was as faithful as its instruction was efficient and salutary. There was rebuke, chastisement, punishment, and when necessary, judgment and the destruction of the guilty. When the people are brought to the border of the land of Canaan, and there, in cowardly fear and unbelief, declare themselves unfit to seize their splendid opportunity, God takes them at their word, turns them back, and gives them their portion in the desert instead of in the land of promise. When Moses and Aaron dishonor him among the people, even they do not escape the penalty of their diso-

bedience. God is no respecter of persons; and the nearer men are to him in privilege and fellowship, the more solemn is their responsibility, and the more injurious is their example when they fall into sin.

At last the Desert School draws toward its close. The last of its forty-two removals has been made. The final ordeals of temptation, treachery and war have been passed. The great camp is pitched in the plain of Moab, before the fords of the Jordan. A new nation fills its tents and throngs its streets and areas. The nation which, forty years before, pronounced its own sentence of incompetency, has passed away. Of all those who stood in any responsible relation to the decision of that day, only three remain; and one of them, the greatest and the best-beloved of all, is about to depart. He has solemnly ordained Joshua to be his successor, and the choice has been ratified by divine sanction. The school closes most appropriately, with eloquence and song. In three notable orations, preserved for us in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reviews the history of his administration, repeats and expounds the law, and foretells the national destiny. Then he chants the same theme in a sub-

lime death-song, a rhapsody of high thought, profound truth, prophetic prediction, affectionate exhortation, and national pride. He pronounces the great benediction, passes out of the camp, climbs the heights of Nebo, enjoys his vision of the land he may not enter, and goes to his mysterious grave.

We too are pupils of the Desert School. Its lessons appeal to us, perhaps even more powerfully than to the contemporary generation, and yield us more readily those essential truths which give them their real value. This, no doubt, is the reason that God thought it worth while to include these records of the education of Israel in that small volume of select literature, with which he has ever since been educating the world.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HEROIC AGE.

THE *new Hebrew nation* came from the desert school prepared to enter upon its providential career. It was not, to be sure, altogether worthy of its great opportunity. Its people were still crude, ignorant, inexperienced, ungrateful, a peevishly fretful folk, impatient of physical discomfort, and given to the saying and doing of hateful things, that sorely tried the meekness of Moses and the forbearing goodness of God.

Why heroic.

They had, nevertheless, some admirable and even noble qualities. They were a serious people, reverent, devout and worshipful. Their very familiarity with God often led them into irreverence of speech and act. They knew themselves to be his special care, his people by special selection and purpose. They believed in their own national destiny, and knew in a general way what it was, and how they were

to achieve it. And, notwithstanding the weakness they showed on some critical occasions, they were really a brave and manly people, temperate, just, patriotic. They were also good soldiers. Military training had been an important part of their discipline in the desert school. An army of more than a half-million men, well organized, well armed, well drilled, could be brought into action at any hour, day or night, at the trumpet-call of its commander.

Two Important Campaigns were carried on by them, one without and the other within the land of promise. The first was led by Moses, and was wholly defensive and retributive. It embraced four great contests, in each of which the enemy was the aggressor and Israel the victor. By each of them an important advantage was secured to the Hebrew cause.

Heroic conflicts.

The first of these conflicts began with a vicious attack by the Canaanite *King Arad,* while the Israelites were still in the Wilderness of Zin, on the southern border of his domains, the same region where the evil report of the spies had turned the people back, forty years before, and where they had been put to rout by the fathers of these same Canaanites. The result of the pres-

ent battle was the overwhelming defeat of the assailants. Thus history sometimes reverses itself. The victory was no doubt of great value as a preparation for the subsequent conquest of the land under Joshua.

The next contest was with *Sihon* king of the Amorites. Israel had left the wilderness, made the long detour around the territory of their cousins, the people of Edom, Ammon and Moab, and had politely requested permission to pass through Amorite territory, on their way to the Jordan. Sihon was furious at the proposition, and assailed the petitioners with a great army. The Israelites, thus forced into battle, put the Amorites to rout, and seized and occupied their country. Thus they came into possession of Gilead, a rich and beautiful region, with its numerous cities, its fertile pastures and grain-fields, and many an historic site, famed in Hebrew story and song, like Peniel and Mahanaim and the ford of the Jabbok, scene and memorial of the wrestling of Jacob.

The third contest was with *Og*, the giant king of Bashan. Bashan lay north of Gilead, and was a broader expanse of the same romantic region of hills and forests, rushing streams, breezy table-lands, pas-

tures swarming with flocks and herds, and wonderful underground cities, where its people could take refuge in times of danger. Out of Edrei, his weird subterranean capital, the old giant rushed forth, like a wild beast out of his lair, leading his savage hordes, to annihilate this orderly pilgrim caravan that had dared to invade his domain. Again forced into battle, the Israelites vanquished the aggressor, and added Bashan to their possessions.

Balaam.

The fourth and last of the conflicts directed by Moses was with their relatives *the Midianites.* It was provoked not by military assault but by a shameful moral wrong, for which Jehovah required his people to mete out retribution in his name. The Midianites, descended from Isaac's half-brother Midian, and the Moabites, descendants of Abram's nephew Lot, were united in a temporary political alliance, and in their common devotion to an abominable type of paganism. Not venturing to attack Israel in open battle, they first tried to bribe the Syrian prophet Balaam to curse the invaders. Balaam, a strange combination of scruples and unscrupulousness, prophetic raptures and vicious cunning, while constrained to utter blessings

instead of curses, contrived to bring a practical curse upon Israel by teaching the Moabite king "to cast a stumbling-block before" them, by enticing them to a pagan feast whose shameless orgies were both idolatrous and licentious.

For this great sin God sent a fatal plague upon those Israelites who had participated in it, and ordered a war of retribution and reprisal against their seducers.

Thus, Moses, who was not allowed to lead Israel to the conquest of the promised land, was the leader of a preliminary campaign scarcely less important. He weakened the Canaanite power in the south country. He converted all eastern Palestine, a region three-fourths as large as the land of Canaan, into Israelitish territory. He stamped upon the consciousness of the people the hideous wickedness of idolatry, and he gave them such a prestige among the hostile nations around them, that they could safely leave the non-combatants of two and a half tribes, say four hundred thousand people for six years in their newly-acquired possessions, while their armed men were fighting their brothers' battles on the other side of the Jordan.

The second campaign was that for the

conquest of Canaan. It was really a series of four campaigns—one against central Palestine, one against the allied kings of the south, one against the allied kings of the north, and one against the scattered strongholds and remainders of pagan power. With the single exception of the temporary repulse at Ai, for which the army at large was not to blame, it was an uninterrupted series of victories.

Joshua.

Joshua the new leader, now over eighty years of age, though still in the full vigor of his strength, was splendidly equipped for his work. His rare natural abilities, his nobility of character, his blameless life, his long intimacy with Moses, his familiarity with the national history, his reputation and experience as the general-in-chief of the army, his popularity and influence with the people, and his solemn ordination as the successor of Moses, raised him to a rank scarcely below that of Moses himself, as the spiritual, civil and military leader of the people.

Like Moses, however, Joshua was, and knew himself to be, but *a deputy leader.* The real leader, the responsible, the acknowledged leader, was Jehovah. He had always been the leader of the people. It

was he who had directed the movements of individuals and families, and the destiny of the nation. He told the people through Joshua that it was he and not Abram who had planned the migration from Ur to Haran, and from Haran to Canaan.* It was he, as Joseph said, who arranged a safe asylum for Jacob and his sons in Egypt. It was God and not Moses who planned, demanded and accomplished the emancipation of his people. It was he who said to Joshua, "Arise, go over this Jordan." Furthermore, not only was he and not Joshua the leader of the army, he and not the army was the conquering power. God said of the Amorites, "I destroyed them before you." He said of Ai, "I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land." Again, on the eve of the great battle of Beth-horon, he said, "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thy hands." Note the tense. "I have *given*." "I *have* delivered." With God a thing decreed is a thing done.

Conquest of Canaan.

He had long been making ready for the enterprise. The providential preparation of the wilderness country for the unmo-

* Joshua 24:3.

lested occupancy of the people during their forty-years sojourn, was not more marked than the providential preparation of the land of Canaan for their conquest and permanent possession. The native tribes were strong, rich, warlike, swarming over the fertile plains, or entrenched in walled cities and mountain fastnesses; and as the most recent archæological researches have shown, possessed a degree of civilization comparable with that of Chaldea or Egypt. But, being on the great highway between those two powers, they were compelled to make alliance with one of them as security against the other. Their latest ally had been Egypt, which, after weakening its Canaanite and Hittite dependencies by a war of subjugation, was obliged, on account of trouble at home, to withdraw its forces. Babylon was at the time unprepared to take advantage of the situation. Thus the native tribes, instead of having the support of a great world power behind them were left to their own resources, and to the issue of a fair fight with the invaders. And thus God was directing the affairs of nations in the interests of his people, while he was preparing them for the coming struggle.

Struggle.

And when the struggle came, his part in it was open and conspicuous. Messages, miracles and visible tokens kept his presence constantly before his people. And they constantly recognized him in their plans and undertakings. Nothing was attempted without consulting him. No exigency was so pressing as to interfere with the religious duties required by him. Before a blow was struck in the contest, they halted at Gilgal, built a memorial altar to commemorate the deliverance he had wrought for them, performed the religious rite they had so long neglected, and deliberately observed the passover feast. Then the forty-years miracle of the manna miraculously ceased, and the people began to live upon the fruits of the land—earnest of their possession of it. And then "the prince of the host of Jehovah" appeared to Joshua, and inaugurated the great campaign. From the first day till the last it was God's campaign and not man's. Special revelations from him, special instructions for the conduct of the war, and special interpositions of divine power in its daily events, gave it the sacredness and the solemn dignity of a great providential movement. We seem

to see him marching at the head of the conquering host.

God's leadership.

Now this *leadership of God,* and his visible agency as the real conquering power in the campaign, is the most conspicuous and the most important fact in its history. And it furnishes the only intelligible key to the book of Joshua. It explains the valor and the success of the army. What deception and fanaticism did for the Moslem hordes, two thousand years later, the actual presence of Jehovah did for the Israelites in this struggle.

It also solves the difficulties of the book. One of these is the miracles. Men have been greatly puzzled and divided in opinion as to the construction to be put upon such accounts as those of the crossing of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho and the long day at Beth-horon. Shall we take them as they read? or shall we ascribe the events to natural causes? or shall we dismiss them as mythical? As to the last alternative, the general credibility of miracles is assumed in this volume as one of the articles of evangelical faith. The only question with which we have to deal, therefore, is as to the kind and the extent of miraculous power here exercised. If we

give the account its most literal interpretation, there is nothing necessarily incredible in the stories. God was doing a great thing, and doing it in his own glorious way. We cannot limit omnipotence. He who had kept the Jordan moving for ages could stop it for a day. He who made the stones of Jericho and ordained the law of gravitation, could suspend the rules for a purpose. He who created light, and held suns and planets in his hand, could set back the clocks of heaven for a few hours. That was his affair. Why should we try to prove that it was too much for him?

But if we wish to "make it easy for God," and to reduce miracles to their lowest terms, science and history furnish us the necessary data. As to the Jordan, we have our choice of two explanations. Geologists tell us, for instance, on the evidence of the alluvial strata of the Jordan valley, that at some unknown period a seismic convulsion seems to have lifted the bed of the river sufficiently to have temporarily stopped the water, and afford a crossing-place; after which the current cut through the obstruction and resumed its course. Again, history records that a land-slide fifteen or twenty miles above

the ford, once actually formed a temporary dam in the narrow gorge, and stopped the river until it rose above the obstruction, and gradually washed it away.

As to Jericho, our own generation has seen more than one city as disastrously shaken to pieces by earthquakes.

As to Beth-horon, the protraction of daylight by refraction is a well-known natural phenomenon; and the mirage of the sun above the horizon is not unknown, and is entirely within the range of natural law.

The supernatural.

But even if we entirely eliminate the supernatural in the events themselves and ascribe them wholly to secondary causes, we still have to account for the miracle of adaptation and coördination, which brought these unusual phenomena to pass at exactly the right moment, or for the miracle of omniscience which foresaw and foretold them. And what shall we say of other scarcely less wonderful miracles recorded in the book? And where shall we draw the line between the ordinary and the extraordinary, between the non-miraculous and the miraculous? To the Hebrew mind all was wonderful, yet all was natural, and nothing was too hard for God.

Another perplexing problem of the book

War measures.

of Joshua solved by the same view of Jehovah as the leader and the conqueror in the campaign, is that of the extermination of the Canaanites. The Lord has been much criticised by some on account of this feature of the war; and his responsibility for it has been stoutly denied by others. The difficulty is not so great as it appears. If the measure in question was not according to the will of God, it may stand on its merits as a war-measure. If it was according to the will of God, and was done at his command, as the text seems to represent, then it must have been consistent with his wisdom, his justice and his benevolence, and he is able to carry the responsibility of it, without apology or extenuation, as he does that of the destruction of the wicked antediluvians in the flood. Moses puts this responsibility upon him by anticipation. "He will destroy them, and he will bring them down before thee: so shalt thou drive them out, and make them to perish quickly, as Jehovah hath spoken unto thee."* Moses also gives two reasons for the measure; first, that the present inhabitants had, by gross wickedness deserved destruction; secondly, that

* Deut. 9:3.

God had long ago promised the land to his own people, to whom, therefore, and not to their enemies, it rightfully belonged. "For the wickedness of these nations Jehovah thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may establish the word which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."* He was working out a great purpose, which he had formed centuries before, which reached forward through countless centuries to come, and upon which depended the preservation of true religion in the earth and the salvation of untold millions of men. Nor was it the first time that he had shown that there are some things he counts of more importance than the perpetuation, in the individual or in the mass, of a depraved and pernicious life.

Why driven out.

This same preëminence of Jehovah in Hebrew life, and Joshua's absolute submission to the divine wisdom and counsel, was the secret of the great leader's success in his civil administration. It kept him humble, sweet-tempered, simple-hearted, unselfish. It carried him through the difficult process of assigning to the several tribes their respective allotments. It inspired

* Deut. 9:5.

that reverence, and that sense of personal and national obligation which breathed through his wonderful farewell address and embodied itself in the solemn covenant under which he bound the people to God.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

"We also will serve Jehovah; for he is our God."

"Ye cannot serve Jehovah."

"Nay; but we will serve Jehovah."

"Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you Jehovah."

"We are witnesses. . . . Jehovah our God will we serve, and unto his voice will we hearken."

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of Jehovah. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it hath heard all the words of Jehovah which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest ye deny your God." *

* Josh. 24:15-27.

CHAPTER X.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF HEBREW HISTORY.

The heroic age did not end at the death of Joshua. The great religious and patriotic impulse with which he inspired the nation, and the brilliant career of national conquest in which he had led them, continued throughout the lifetime of the generation immediately affected, though under changing conditions. Instead of general campaigns under the united forces of the nation, were the equally victorious operations of the separate tribes against the enemies yet remaining in their respective territories.

Had this work been continued and completed, Israel would have been masters of that splendid country, safe from the attacks of hostile neighbors, and from the seductions of a debasing paganism.

But unfortunately, they conceived a different plan, upon which they no doubt congratulated themselves, as easier,

shrewder and more advanced than the one which the Lord had made for them. "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxed strong, that they put the Canaanites to taskwork, and did not utterly drive them out." Fatal compromise, whose result was precisely what Moses and Joshua had predicted. The evil consequences did not come in that generation, but they came in the next, and with deadly effect. What the Midianites had partially and temporarily affected forty years before, their fellow pagans now accomplished on a larger scale. The story is briefly told in the second chapter of Judges. The transition from the seventh verse to the eleventh is like that from day into night.

Unconquered enemies.

"And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel. . . . . And there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim; and they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, ... and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves down unto them: and they provoked Jehovah to anger. And they forsook Jehovah and served Baal and the Ashtaroth."

Baal and Ashtoreth (plural Baalim and Ashtaroth) were the chief gods of the Canaanites and the Phœnicians; and their worship included rites indescribably vulgar and licentious. We can hardly appreciate the mortification of the devout Jewish historian who is compelled to record the degradation of those who, having known Jehovah, and having been instructed in the truth and worship of a pure religion, could bring themselves to "bow down," corporally and morally, to these abominable idols, the deification of brutality and lust. Baal worship.

Much less can we understand the feelings with which God himself looked down upon such apostasy. No wonder that "the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel." But it was the anger of a father at the waywardness of his children, the anger of grieving love. And the punishment he inflicted was not vengeful but corrective, an heroic remedy for a desperate evil. "He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that despoiled them; and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about."

"*Enemies round about*" aptly describes the situation. An array of hostile tribes, like so many hungry wolves around a faint-

ing roe, beset poor little Israel. Syria on the north and northeast, Moab and Ammon on the east and southeast, Philistia in the southwest, Canaanite hosts in the northwest, and Midianites, Amalekites and other wandering hordes everywhere. One after another, and sometimes in a league of two or three at once, they took their turn not only in harassing the children of Israel, but in subjugating them, ruling them, oppressing them. So low had idolatry brought the people of God. "They could no longer stand before their enemies." When the heart becomes corrupt, the manly virtues decay. When men sever themselves from God, they cut the nerve of courage, enthusiasm and power. Those who with his help had been invincible, were now helpless. The enemies whom they had made subject to taskwork were now their task-masters. Six periods of such servitude are recorded, aggregating more than a hundred years, though it is probable that some of them were more or less local and contemporaneous.

Sin and retribution.

But over this heart-breaking story of sin and retribution that fills so much of the book of Judges, there falls from time to time *the light of hope*. As God had in-

tended, the afflictions of his people led them to repentance, and brought them back to him. And he quickly responded to the penitent cry. "And Jehovah raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those that despoiled them." Over against their six oppressions are six deliverances, under twelve judges, or "saviours," as they were well called. Over against the one hundred years of oppression, averaging ten years to a period, is an aggregate of over three hundred years of religious and civil restoration, averaging twenty-five years to a period, three of the periods being forty years long, and one of them eighty. Thus the light far exceeded the darkness. The epochs of prosperity furnished less material for history but brought a larger measure of blessing.

Light in darkness.

Moreover, these exigencies and crises of the national life revealed the *heroic possibilities* of the Hebrew character. Some of the most picturesque figures in Old Testament history, and some of the most dramatic incidents, belong to this period of rest and unrest, peace and war. Gideon, Barak, Jephthah and Samson did not measure up to the New Testament standard of virtue, nor did they attain to the

moral grandeur of such men as Joshua and Moses. But they had the faith, the patriotism, the daring, the rugged energy and power that made them capable of splendid achievement, and won them a place in the hero roll of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. There were heroines, too, in those days, like Deborah, the poet judge, and Jael, the slayer of Sisera, and the anonymous woman with her deadly millstone in the tower of Thebez.

God in human affairs.

But *the most notable* feature of this period, as of the preceding one, was not human achievements, nor human character, but the relation of God to human affairs, and his attitude toward his people. He caused them to succeed when they obeyed him, and to fail when they disobeyed. He sent messengers, human and angelic, to rebuke them for sin. He chastened them by the hands of their enemies. He forgave them when they repented. He selected the judges who were to deliver them, put his spirit upon them, instructed them in their duty, and wrought deliverance by their hands. He was the force behind it all and within it all. He always took the initiative. And, no matter under what conditions, favorable or un-

favorable, through the agency of men or in spite of them, he carried steadily forward the great unhalting, unchanging purpose of the ages. Not for a moment did he turn from the pursuit of that purpose. Not for a moment did he despair of his people. They often compelled him to resort to severe measures, and thereby wronged themselves and delayed their national development; but he never gave them up. He knew what he could do with them and what they could do for him; and he knew that his plan could not fail, because his will and his omnipotence were behind it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RISE AND GLORY OF THE HEBREW MONARCHY.

The *Hebrew Theocracy* was, to a large extent, an adaptation to changed conditions of those conceptions of God, and of those principles of obligation to him, which had dominated the patriarchal system. From the beginning, he had been to every devout soul the supreme ruler of men. His will was law, and his guidance and assistance were sought and depended upon in all human affairs. Every household was a little kingdom of God. The head of the family was its ruler and priest, but only in submission to their divine head.

And when these isolated patriarchates were organized into tribes, and the tribes into a nation under the Mosaic system, the essential principles of the older system were retained. The civil functions of the household ruler were modified by the

requirements of the community. The duties of the household priest were for the most part delegated to the official priesthood. But the supremacy of Jehovah in both the religious and the secular realms was unchanged. We have seen how this supremacy asserted itself, and was accepted as a matter of course, under the theocracy, which was but another and larger pattern of the kingdom of God.

Monarchy.

And now the time for still another radical change in the form of government was approaching. The venerable Eli, priest and judge, godly father of ungodly sons, died of the shock of evil tidings from the battlefield of Ebenezer. Samuel, his successor, child of prayer and man of faith, priest, judge and seer, godly father of ungodly sons, was growing old. The people chafed under the misrule of the sons, whom Samuel had made his deputies, and demanded a king in their stead. Samuel, grieved and indignant, vainly strove to dissuade them from their purpose. But the Lord bade him comply with their demand, and himself selected the king, whom Samuel anointed for the royal office, and introduced to his people. Such was the beginning of the Hebrew monarchy.

Or theocracy.

But it was not the end of the Hebrew theocracy. It was the continuance of the theocracy under a new name. The so-called king was nothing but a judge with a new title. That was all the people asked for. "That our king may judge us," they said, "and go out before us, and fight our battles." A judge's functions according to Hebrew ideas, neither more nor less. The pomp and circumstance of royalty would develop in due time, as Samuel warned them would be the case. But at the outset Saul was no more kingly than Gideon or Jephthah had been. Nor was he, from first to last theoretically a whit less subject than they had been to the authority of God. God selected him, appointed him, endued him with his spirit, told him what he might and might not do, called him to account when he disobeyed, and rejected and superseded him when he proved himself unfit for his place.

In other words, God consented to the readjustment of the human machinery of the government; but he never consented to the abrogation of one whit of his own prerogative as the supreme Ruler; nor did either king or people dream of his doing so. This fact cannot be too clearly un-

derstood; for without it we shall never be able to understand the nature or the history of the Hebrew monarchy, which, like the systems that had preceded it, was but another form of the kingdom of God.

David brought to the throne no new conception of the kingdom; but he did bring to it a new spirit of conformity to the theocratic principle, and of submission to the supreme Ruler, whose appointee and servant he ever acknowledged himself to be. Brave warrior, wise statesman, inspired poet, devout, spiritual, conscientious, just, with a large sense of responsibility for his people, and of accountability to God, he subdued his country's enemies, enlarged its domain, organized its institutions, unified its life, established its capital, brought prestige to its name, gave dignity to its court, and stateliness, fervor and enthusiasm to its worship. He made great mistakes, and fell into great sins; but his ruling purpose was to obey and to glorify God; and he was true to the historic conception of the national religion, namely, not that of the union of church and state, but that of their unity, their identity. The nation was the church, and

David.

the church was the nation; and of that indivisible unity God was the head.

What David had achieved by war and by patriotic and religious enthusiasm, Solomon strengthened and perfected by conciliation and diplomacy. He attained prodigious wisdom. He accumulated prodigious wealth. He increased his army, his royal retinue and the splendor of his court. He developed industry and commerce. He built magnificent palaces, and a still more magnificent temple. He formed powerful alliances, raised his kingdom to the rank of a first-rate Asiatic power, and made himself the greatest and most famous man of his time.

At the beginning of his reign he maintained the traditions of the Hebrew political system, including its theocratic principle, with his father's simplicity of heart and dependence upon God. What could be finer than the spirit in which he responded in that night-vision at Gibeon, when God said:

"Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great lovingkindness, ... that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Jehovah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father:

and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. . . . . Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people?" *

Solomon.

Mark the term "judge" as still denoting the ruler's function. Mark the distinct recognition of the theocratic principle. Everything is made to depend upon God. He is the real ruler, and the king is but his "servant." To him Solomon ascribes not only his crown but his very existence; and to him he looks for the wisdom and ability he needs to make his reign successful.

It was in this spirit that he built the temple, lavishing upon it millions upon millions of the royal treasure, importing the products of Syrian forests, and the finest skill of Syrian art, and employing the labors of tens of thousands of men. It was a magnificent offering, and a mute but eloquent expression of the supreme importance of religion.

What prayer ever vibrated with a deeper tone of reverent and grateful faith than Solomon's prayer of dedication? †

* 1 Kings 3:5–9.
† 1 Kings 8:23–61.

"O Jehovah, the God of Israel, there is no god like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath; . . . . But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded! Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Jehovah my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day." In the same spirit was his benediction upon his people. "Jehovah our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us nor forsake us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his ordinances, which he commanded our fathers . . . that all the peoples of the earth may know that Jehovah, he is God; there is none else. Let your heart therefore be perfect with Jehovah our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day."

Had Solomon done what he exhorted the people to do, had he lived up to the spirit of this dedicatory service for the remainder of his life, how different would have been the record of his reign, and the history of the Hebrew nation. But too soon luxury, wealth, sensuality and affiliation with paganism corrupted his heart and undermined his faith. He not only exceeded his father in polygamous excesses, but violated the most solemn commands of Jehovah by intermarrying with the devo-

tees of false gods. He filled his shameful harem with bewitching idolatresses who beguiled him into the worship of the vilest of the pagan gods, and even made him a patron and propagandist of their detestable religions.

Surrender to Paganism.

This amazing surrender to paganism marks the beginning of the end of the Hebrew monarchy. It did not alienate God from the nation, or turn him for a moment from the great purpose he was pursuing. But it necessitated another period of discipline through national calamity which stopped but little short of national extinction.

Solomon kept up the glitter and the gaudy pageantry of royalty; but the exhilaration and the joy of achievement that come with the sense of fellowship with God, were gone. He was spared the anguish of witnessing the ruin brought upon his people by the influences he had set in motion; but he was forewarned of their coming and as he went to his grave, conscious of moral failure, and of the displeasure of God, he was aware that the "enemies round about" were already closing in upon the degenerate and weakened nation.

CHAPTER XII.

DISRUPTION AND DISINTEGRATION.

The attractions of the Bible, that is the things that draw us to its study, and that make its study worth while, include not only its beauties and its portrayals of virtuous character, but also those heart-breaking stories of sin and retribution, which reveal the quality of human nature with which God had to deal, the operation of causes and effects within the moral realm, and the spiritual lessons to be drawn from the record. These things attract us, as tragedies attract us, by their instructiveness and their power of moral impression.

It is this kind of interest—the interest of the tragic—that pertains to the period of Hebrew history which next comes before us. And there is nothing in Hamlet or Macbeth or any other tragedy of fiction, that makes sin appear more hideous, or more futile, disastrous and self-defeating. Nowhere does individual virtue shine more clearly, or courage, fidelity and

heroism seem nobler or more rewarding. Of this national tragedy, whose stage is Palestine, whose actors are kings and armies and populations, and whose culmination is national ruin, we can sketch only the briefest outline.

Disruption.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon and an idolatrous Ammonite woman, succeeds his father on the throne, for which he straightway proves himself unfit. By his very first act he alienates more than three-fourths of his subjects, who repudiate his authority and set up a government of their own, under his more capable rival, Jeroboam.

This is no political accident. It is the providence of God, in fulfilment of prophecy. Solomon was warned of its coming; and Jeroboam, having been divinely chosen for the place, has been officially informed of his appointment by God's messenger, the prophet Ahijah. He has also been told upon what conditions he may retain his power and become the head of a great national dynasty.

"If thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in mine eyes, ... I will be with thee, and will build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."

This splendid opportunity Jeroboam recklessly throws away, and in place of the policy of obedience to God, under which prosperity and power are promised him, he adopts the policy of what he believes to be political expediency. He sins and teaches Israel to sin, promoting idolatry among his people, and exerting so pernicious an influence upon them that his name becomes a synonym for royal depravity. To "walk in the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat" is to go to the limit of evil doing.

Nineteen evil kings.

The kingdom he founded endured less than two and a half centuries. It had nineteen kings, every one of whom followed Jeroboam's evil example. There were able rulers among them, and mighty warriors, great kings in the sight of men; but the monotonous record is that "they did evil in the sight of the Lord." Seven of them secured their throne by assassination and usurpation. Idolatry of the lowest type was openly practised and encouraged, and the worship, the ordinances and the spirit of the Mosaic system were contemptuously neglected.

Again, as in the days of the judges, it came to pass that the people, having bowed

down to the idols of their enemies, were forced to bow down to their power. Not only was Israel harassed by the petty tribes upon its borders, but it became the prey of the great empires, Syria and Assyria. The latter, having now gained the supremacy in western Asia, swept again and again, with relentless conquest, over Israel's territory, carrying tribe after tribe of its people into captivity; and finally, in 722 B. C., destroyed its capital, and brought its kingdom to an ignominious end.

Hebrew protestants.

Yet all was not dark. God had not forsaken his people, and there was an uncorrupted remnant that had not forsaken him. There were stern prophets like Elijah, to hurl the thunders of the law at transgressors, crowned or uncrowned. There were gentle spirits like Hoshea, to preach the gospel of repentance and forgiveness. There were hundreds of young men, in the schools of the prophets and out of them, who had consecrated themselves to a holy service. There were thousands of faithful souls, even in the darkest of the dark years, and under the very eyes of Jezebel herself, who did not and would not bow the knee to Baal. There was a

great protestant host, Levites and non-Levites, who, for their faith's sake, forsook houses and lands and native cities in Israel, because Israel had forsaken God.

But a righteous minority must often submit to conditions for which it is not responsible. One of the moral lessons which this history teaches, which all history teaches, is that in the complex relations of life the innocent must suffer with the guilty. There was favor for the righteous and pardon for the penitent, but for Israel as a nation there was no redemption. In chains and humiliation and bitterness of heart, the sad procession of captives were driven away into the enemy's land, and for them the path of exile never turned backward.

Judah's kings.

Meantime, the kingdom of Judah was having its share of evil and calamity. It outlasted its sister kingdom by a hundred and thirty-five years, greatly excelled it in fidelity to the faith, and greatly exceeded it in influence and power. Like Israel, Judah had nineteen kings. Unlike Israel its kings were all in one hereditary line, according to God's promise to David their ancestor, and according to the divine purpose of grace for the world. They were not

all wicked, like the kings of Israel. The bad kings, to be sure, outnumbered the good ones, eleven to eight; but the good reigns outmeasured the bad ones by an average of two years to one. The five periods of bad government aggregated 130½ years. The four periods of good government aggregated 261 years—a ratio of exactly two to one in favor of public righteousness. Thus again the light exceeded the darkness, though at times the two overlapped each other, and blended in a murky twilight scarcely better than darkness itself.

Fragmentary history.

The fragmentary structure of the books of Kings and Chronicles, alternating back and forth between Judah and Israel, make it difficult for us to form in our minds a distinct picture of events, in their connection and perspective. But if we take out of the twofold chronicle the facts pertaining to the kingdom of Judah, add to them the items supplied by the prophets, illuminate the whole with the light that comes from contemporaneous Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian records, and of late from the very stones of the old Judean cities, fill the land with scenes of industry, with great armies, with smoking altars,

with mad festivities, with the intense life of millions of eager, passionate men and women, we have spread before us a panorama of events scarcely equaled by any other four centuries of history.

We see the holy city, glorious with its splendid temple and its royal palaces, now the center of true worship, now of indecent idolatry. We see cruel Moloch, now with shrieking babes in his arms, now overthrown and ground to powder, by the zeal of the worshipers of Jehovah. We see the altars and images of Baal and Ashtoreth, now crowning the green hills, and surrounded by their vile priests and the orgies of licentious worship, now swept away in the fury of religious reaction. We see wicked kings, like Manasseh, Ahaz and Rehoboam, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, sinning and leading their people into sin. We see godly kings, like Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah, abolishing idols and idol abominations, repairing the ruined temple, instructing their people in the law of the Lord, and restoring the purity of worship. There are long periods of national depravity, when sin is shameless and popular. There are longer periods of national reform, when Judah returns in

penitence to the God of its fathers. There are armed invasions, fierce battles, humiliating defeats, disastrous victories, leagues made and unmade, ruinous levies to purchase assistance from mercenary allies and amnesty from rapacious foes. There are great deliverances and wonderful answers to prayer, as when Jehoshaphat and his army "stand still and see the salvation of God," or as when the host of Sennacherib perishes in a night. **Thrilling events.**

It is the age of prophecy. The greatest of the speaking prophets, and all but two or three of the writing prophets belong to this period. Voices of rebuke, of denunciation, of expostulation, of hope, of promise, of comfort, sound forth, in season and out of season, sometimes heeded and obeyed, sometimes answered with scoffing and persecution. The people are warned that their calamities are a retribution for their sins, and are assured that if they will return to righteousness, their prosperity will return to them. But reforms are spasmodic and incomplete and the general tendency of public morals is downward. **Prophecy.**

Meantime, the surrounding populations are in fierce commotion. Great empires are contending for supremacy; and poor

little Judah is crushed between them. Nineveh rises to power, conquers Syria, swallows up Israel, breaks the yoke of Egypt, and begins the conquest and captivity of Judah.

Mighty changes.

Babylon overthrows Nineveh and succeeds to the supremacy of western Asia, including Palestine. Having exhausted the resources of Judea by plunder and tribute, it completes the work of devastation and ruin, destroys Jerusalem and leads procession after procession of its people into captivity. Again the innocent suffer with the guilty, and again the guilty know that their calamities are due to their own sins, and their contempt for oft-repeated warnings and exhortations.

They do not know what infinite pity follows them in their exile. They do not know by what miracles of wisdom and power their woes are to be turned into blessings. Babylon is less cruel than Nineveh. Captivity and suffering cure the people of idolatry. Many of them are raised to positions of honor and responsibility. They enjoy a large measure of religious liberty. Their prophets see glorious visions. And when the divinely-appointed term of exile is completed, Cyrus,

the divinely-chosen liberator is brought to the throne; his spirit is "stirred up" to proclaim the emancipation of his Hebrew subjects; and a remnant returns to rebuild the temple and the holy city and begin a new era of national life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHARM OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

Prophecy is a verbal miracle. As a miraculous act is the divine will exerted in an exceptional way to produce a physical result, so prophetic revelation is the divine mind acting in an exceptional way to produce a mental and moral result. It is a message from God, to men, through men. And of all types of discourse, in books or out of them, this is the most wonderful.

It is a unique type. We make what we call prophecies, but they are of a character widely different from this. They originate with ourselves; this originates with God. They rest upon human judgment and opinion; this rests upon divine knowledge. They express convictions; this expresses certainties. They are always predictive; this is not necessarily so. Sometimes it pertains to the future, sometimes to the present or to the past. To the mind

of God, time, like space, is one great indivisible whole.

Scope of prophecy.

The Scope of Prophecy is as broad as human life. Any interest of man, material, social, political, moral, spiritual, may become the subject of prophecy. It may concern a trivial matter, like the finding of Saul's asses; or a case of life and death, like king Hezekiah's sickness; or great ethical principles, like the ten commandments; or a specific act, like the anointing of David; or impending events, like the fall of Babylon; or visions of far-off ages, like the advent of the Messiah, the triumphs of the gospel or the glories of the New Jerusalem.

But whatever may be the subject or the object of prophecy, its essential character remains unchanged. It is always a message from God, to men, through an inspired human messenger called a prophet. It is this that distinguishes it not only from uninspired literature, but from other biblical types. The Bible records many sayings of men who speak their own thoughts in their own way. They relate events; they express sentiments; they state opinions; they give maxims, quoted or original; they offer arguments, sound or unsound,

like the dialogues of Job and his friends, for instance. And it is all a legitimate part of that body of Scripture which, in the wisdom of God, has been recorded and transmitted for our edification. We could not spare any part of it.

The Lord speaks.

But prophecy has an additional value, peculiar to itself. The prophet does not speak his own thoughts. He speaks the special message given him from above, and under the absolute control of its Author. Whatever we may think of the kind and degree of inspiration possessed by the biblical historians, biographers, philosophers, dramatists, poets, the inspiration of the prophets is indisputable. "For," says Peter, "no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Moses, who was himself a typical prophet, has given us God's own statement of the nature of prophetic inspiration, and of the responsibility it imposes upon the inspired man, and upon those to whom he speaks.

"I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my word which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet that shall speak a word presumptuously in my

name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." *

The first part of this passage is quoted by Peter in his temple address, as specifically applicable to Christ. But the last part cannot be so applied, and may be taken as descriptive of prophecy in general. Notice the items in the description. The prophetic office is to be continued. Its nature is to be substantially what it was with Moses. Like Moses, every prophet is to be chosen to his office by Jehovah, and not by his own will or that of his fellow men. Like Moses, he is selected not from an exclusive class, but from among his "brethren." Yet, like Moses, he is raised by this exceptional endowment to a position superior to that of his brethren. Into his mouth, as into that of Moses, God puts the words that he is to speak; and that message, so spoken, is as authoritative and as final as if spoken by God himself. It must not be suppressed by the prophet; it must not be despised or disregarded by the people. These essential features of prophecy appear in all biblical representations of the subject. The prophet is

* Deut. 18:17-20.

called a "seer," that is, one endowed with a transcendent power of insight; a "watchman," that is, one who discovers approaching danger and gives timely warning; a "man of God," that is, one who lives in peculiar intimacy with him; "Jehovah's messenger," that is, one whose business it is to be a medium of communication between God and men. His message is called "the word of Jehovah" or "a burden," or a "vision," according to its nature; and the habitual formula of a prophet is "Thus saith the Lord."

It was this consciousness of the presence and the directing influence of the divine Spirit that gave the prophets such confidence in their message and such fearless courage in its delivery. No potentate was so august that the humblest seer who had God's word to speak would hesitate to face him with it. No personal consequences: ridicule, disgrace, persecution, dungeon, exile, death, could terrify him. No flattery, or bribe, or offer of human favor, power or honor, could silence him.

Superhuman and inspired.

The superhuman thrill and exaltation which prophetic inspiration gave a man, and the new soul that it seemed to put into him, may be seen most strikingly in the

contrast between the prophet in his ordinary state, and the same man under the influence of the Spirit. Moses the herdsman, in the pasture-ranges of Horeb, is timid and self-distrustful, and tells Jehovah flatly that he cannot do what is demanded of him. Moses the inspired servant of the Almighty, "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," stands unabashed in the royal palace, thunders his astounding message in the ears of Pharaoh, and day after day, holds king and people in terror. Elijah, in the transport of prophetic exaltation, pours out rebuke and denunciation against king Ahab, and rouses the people to a fury of zeal for the extermination of idolatry. Elijah in the reaction of exhausted feeling, trembles at the mere rumor of a threat from the wicked Jezebel, whom he had so boldly denounced, gives up all hope, flees in terror to the wilderness, and prays for death.

But not only does the nature of the prophet assert itself when he is not under the power of special inspiration, it is never wholly disguised. Something of his own personality pervades all his utterances, even in his most exalted moods. Like every other man, he has his peculiarities of

mind, of temperament, of style, which give individuality to his utterances, and distinguish prophet from prophet. Isaiah has his sublime conceptions, his far-reaching visions, his poetic beauty and eloquence. Jeremiah has his shrewd comprehension of the meaning and the tendency of current events, the bitterness of a patriot's grief for the ruin of his country, and the deep sorrow of a man of God over the sin that causes it. Ezekiel, sharing the captivity of his brethren, dwells on the evils that went before it and the blessings that are to come after, and illuminates its darkness with splendid visions and imagery.

Yet human expression.

This preservation of the individuality of the prophet is one of the notable facts and principles in all inspiration. As the nature and the intrinsic value of the gold remains unchanged, whatever mintage it may pass through, and whosesoever image or superscription it may bear, so the thoughts of God, passing through a human mind, receive the shape, the impress and the sign-manual of the soul that transmits it, but with no loss of meaning or sanctity. The voice is the voice of man; the message is the message of God. Few characters in biblical history, few characters in all his-

tory, preserve their individuality more distinctly than do the prophets.

Prophecy is a corollary of omniscience, as physical miracles are a corollary of omnipotence. Man has an imperfect knowledge of the past, and an imperfect power of recalling so much of it as lies within the range of his own experience and observation. All the past lies within the range of God's experience and observation, he has a perfect knowledge of it, and it lives as a perpetual and unfading reality in his mind. With this realm of knowledge prophecy deals largely, with its sins, with its mercies, with its achievements, and with its power of appeal as a motive with men.

Man has an imperfect knowledge of the present. He has an imperfect power of perceiving its facts and of reasoning from them, together with a great liability to mistake illusions for facts and falsehood for truth. God has a perfect knowledge of the present. The universe lies open to his gaze. He knows all the facts, the causes that produced them, and the results which they produce. Prophecy deals largely also with these things, with their aspects, their significance, their relation to the will of

God, and to the character, the duty and the destiny of men.

Marvelous prophecies.

Of the future man has no positive knowledge whatever. James speaks a sweeping truth when he says, "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." We *know* not. We anticipate, we expect, we hope, we even predict, but we do not know. Our most confident expectations are based on our assumption of the uniformity of nature. We rest everything and risk everything upon this broad assumption. The farmer sows his crops, the chemist mixes his solutions; the doctor prescribes for his patient; the sailor launches upon the sea; the astronomer foretells the eclipse. All human life proceeds upon the assumption that within the range of natural law, what has been will be.

The supposition is entirely rational. All experience justifies it. The probability on which it rests is strong enough to satisfy any rational mind, and for practical purposes is as good as certainty. We treat it as if it were certainty. We must do so. To doubt it would be absurd. To act as if we doubted it would be insane. Yet all the while we are aware that it is not a certainty, but only a very strong probability.

We know not what shall be on the morrow. We do not know infallibly so much as that the sun will rise on the morrow.

But God knows infallibly all that is to occur on the morrow, and the next day, and the next, to the end of time. He foreknows all that he will do, for it is perfectly thought out and arranged in a predetermined plan, which is a part of the contents of his mind. He knows all that men will do, for he has taken account of it, and adjusted his plan to it, having determined how much of man's intentions he will permit, and how much he will prevent.

To predict the future, therefore, is, so far as God is concerned, simply to recognize the contents of his own mind. Predictive prophecy is as easy for him and as credible to us as any statement of current fact or history. It is simply history written in advance.

It is this type of prophecy that seems so wonderful to men, and that makes such demands upon human faith, because the knowledge on which it is based is so absolutely impossible to man. In that remarkable passage already quoted in part, concerning the function of the prophet, God

gives one method for testing the genuineness of prophecy.

"And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which Jehovah hath not spoken? when a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him." *

Prophecies fulfilled.

There were other tests of authenticity—the character and recognized credit of the prophet, the harmony of his utterances with admitted truth, and known obligation, and the self-evidencing force of the message itself. But the test of fulfilment, wherever it is applicable, is conclusive. In many cases, it is the only test possible. Sometimes, as in the case of the Messianic prophecies, for instance, fulfilment must be waited for through the lapse of centuries before the prophetic vision can be even understood.

It is in such cases that we have that peculiar prophetic perspective that combines the near and the remote in a single view. As we look toward the west at the close of day, and see the horizon, the fading cloud and the evening star all at the same apparent distance, and blending in a single har-

* Deut. 18:21, 22.

monious picture things that are millions of miles apart, so the prophet, looking toward the future, sees things that are centuries and millenniums apart brought together in a single vision. Thus prophecy served a double purpose, as a comment upon current fact, or a prediction of impending events, and as a portrayal of the scenes of far-off ages.

But whether the point of view be prospective or retrospective, near or remote, the essential character of prophecy as God's message to men through men, remains unchanged; and its authenticity and reliability give it its charm and its value as a unique type of literature. In our English Bible, seventeen of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, embracing about one-fourth of its matter, are prophetic. The Hebrews called these books, with the exception of Lamentations and Daniel, "the Latter Prophets," and they called the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings "the Former Prophets." Such was the importance attached to the prophetic element in books chiefly historical.

Value of message.

It was not less prominent in earlier times, even from the beginning. God

spoke a prophetic message to our first parents in Eden. He spoke others to Noah, to 'Abram, to Jacob, to Moses. When prophecy became a vocation, it merely gave more definiteness and more continuity to the revelations which had previously been occasional.

It was through the prophets that Jehovah kept in living contact with his people. In the law their religious system and their religious duties were formulated. In prophecy they found an appeal to historic memories, and an exhortation to present obedience, that kept alive in them their reverence for the word of God, and their sense of perpetual obligation to observe his law and his worship. As a forecast of the future, prophecy made God the great reality in human life, and his care over his people and his purpose to bless them and redeem them, the great facts in their national destiny. Sin was denounced in the most scathing terms. Warnings and threatenings were uttered. Judgments were predicted and executed upon the disobedient. But every utterance thrilled with the voice of sorrowing love, and the sternest denunciations ended with promises of restored favor for the penitent.

Prophecy taught the relation of God to the non-Hebrew races. They, too, were under his perpetual observation and control. He took cognizance of their acts. He called them to account for their sins. He used them for the accomplishment of his purposes. He put strict limits upon their power. He overturned their thrones and palaces at his will. The world was seen to be a great unit, created and governed by him. The human race was a vast organism, vitalized, energized, operated by him. Human life was a series of events moving according to his eternal plan, in fulfilment of a gracious purpose toward a beneficent end.

For whole race.

To ourselves, and the Christian world in general, prophecy has a wonderful value, perhaps a greater value than to the age to which it was originally spoken. This is probably the reason that it has been preserved and handed down to us as a part of authentic Scripture. Considered merely as literature, it is of surpassing interest. Dealing with the grandest themes, uttering the most momentous truths, bringing to men the thoughts of God, it rises to a height of sublimity and beauty commensurate with the dignity of its message.

But its literary qualities are the least of its merits. We owe to it much of our conception of God, his character, his attributes, his interest in human affairs, his attitude toward sin, his ideal of righteousness, his ways with men and with nations. We see him moving grandly through the centuries, not only participating in current events, great and small, but dominating them, foreordaining them, and carrying forward, without halt or hesitation, the plan of the ages.

Motive for revelation.

Best of all, we see that the motive behind it all is beneficent. We see that the end sought is moral. We see men schooled and shaped under the hand of God, by joy and by trial, by success and by failure, that they may be perfected in character. We see great national movements and achievements, evolutions and revolutions, working out the divine purpose. And in the background of the prophetic picture, we see a transcendent vision, the dawning light of the Messianic age, the glorious form of the Son of man, the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

So at last we find not only that we are interested in prophecy as a unique type of literature, as the repository of the sub-

limest utterances of voice or pen, and as the revelation of great and vital truths; but that we are ourselves the subject of prophecy, and are even now helping to fulfil it. Our epoch, our race, our generation, our individual lives and destiny, are a part of that plan of the ages which the prophets unfold, and of the consummation which they foretell.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHARM OF OLD TESTAMENT POETRY.

LITERATURE *begins with a song.* Or rather, it is preceded by songs, long before formal literature is possible. Music, which is the soul of poetry, is a natural language, and the love of it is one of the primitive instincts of the race. Melody and rhythm give force to the crudest expressions of thought, and beauty and sweetness to the simplest affections.

Charm of poetry.

They also furnish a suitable medium for the maturest products of the mind. Literature not only begins with poetry, it culminates in it. The great classics of all literatures, ancient and modern, are poetical. And the world never outgrows them, never gets tired of them. As the eye loves beautiful pictures, so the ear loves sweet sounds; and mind and heart are thrilled by them. In that complex and mysterious unity, the human soul, the spiritual sense

responds to the physical; and it is when the two act together, and react upon each other, that the finest effects are produced. Hence the power of poetry—its appeal to the imagination, its brevity and sententiousness, its symmetry of structure, its music of sweet sounds, and all those subtle, elusive, indefinable qualities that belong to it.

As we might expect, therefore, the Holy Scriptures, the greatest of all literatures, make large use of poetry. Hebrew verse is not rhymed, like our own, nor has it the uniform metrical divisions to which we are accustomed. On the other hand, Hebrew prose sometimes possesses a rhythmical quality scarcely less musical than that of poetry itself. Hence it is not always easy to fix the exact line of demarcation between the prosaic and the poetical.

Charms of Hebrew poetry.

The most distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry is what is called *parallelism,* that is the presentation of the same idea in two or more different ways. Sometimes it is in the form of repetition, by the use of synonymous terms:

> "He will cover thee with his pinions,
> And under his wings shalt thou take refuge."

Here the effect is to let the mind dwell

upon the idea, and so make it more vivid and impressive.

Sometimes the repetition changes the conception from the general to the specific, or vice versa:

"The trees of Jehovah are filled with moisture,
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted."

Again, the second part amplifies the first:

"And he remembered for them his covenant,
And repented according to the multitude of his lovingkindness."

Sometimes the terms used in one member of the parallelism are interpreted by those in the other. This is one of the most important forms of the figure:

"That thy way be known upon earth:
Thy salvation among all nations."

Another and very effective type of parallelism, especially in didactic passages, like the Proverbs, is that of contrast, where a truth is stated first affirmatively and then negatively:

"The house of the wicked shall be overthrown;
But the tent of the upright shall flourish."
"Righteousness exalteth a nation;
But sin is a reproach to any people."

Poetical parallelism, which has well been called "the rhythm of ideas," admirably

fitted Hebrew poetry for use in responsive worship, so extensively employed in the temple service, in which great choruses called to each other, and answered each other, choir to choir and song to song.

The earlier books of the Bible contain few passages which can properly be called poetical. In Genesis we find the unexplained confession and defiance of the conscience-smitten Lamech, and the semi-prophetic utterances of Noah, Isaac and Jacob, concerning their children. In Exodus we have the magnificent song of Moses and the children of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea, and the answering song of Miriam and the Hebrew women. In Numbers we read the fine raptures of Balaam, who, carried out of his sordid self in the ecstasy of prophetic inspiration, utters the four brief poems, which for grandeur of conception, beauty of diction, and transcendent power of vision, are not surpassed in the whole range of prophecy. In Deuteronomy we have the sublime death-songs of Moses, which combine the finest qualities of both poetry and oratory. In Judges we have the song of Deborah,—poetess, prophetess, patriot, heroine, leader of men, military champion, the Hebrew

Sublime songs.

Joan of Arc, who could first inspire heroic deeds, and then celebrate them in stirring verse. A century later, Hannah, the mother of Samuel, breathes her song of maternal ecstasy, an Old Testament Magnificat, over the birth of her God-given son. Within the lifetime of that son the man arose who was to be the Hebrew poet by preëminence, "the sweet singer of Israel" under whose genius poetry became a leading feature in the national literature.

The Book of Psalms presents the highest type of Hebrew poetry, though written by many different poets, in widely separated periods of time, and upon a great variety of themes, one dominant tone sounds through it from beginning to end, the voice of religious feeling. If the subject be some aspect of nature—the sea, the mountains, the forest, the stars, thunder, wind, storm—it is presented as a manifestation of the divine power. If it relate to some passage in Hebrew history, like the Exodus, the crossing of the sea, the incidents of the wilderness journey, the instrumentality of Jehovah is the principal feature. If it have to do with Jerusalem, it is with Jerusalem as the city of God. If it refer to David, it is to David as the servant

Religious feeling the dominant note.

of God. If practical wisdom be the theme, it is wisdom according to the mind of God.

Nor is religion an incidental idea in the Psalms. It is the principal subject of thought. Its obligations, its aspirations, its sentiments, its ideals of character, its condemnation of evil, its promises of reward for virtue, the bitterness of sin, the stings of an accusing conscience, the blessedness of forgiveness, the joy of right living, the privilege of fellowship with God, the holy ecstasies of worship—these are some of the things upon which the psalmists dwell, and in which they find ever new occasions for their repeated outbursts of adoration and praise.

David.

Of the one hundred and fifty psalms, the authorship of one hundred is given in their headings; and of these, seventy-three are ascribed to David. He it was who, both by the quality of his own productions, and by the place which he assigned to psalmody in public worship, raised it to the place which it ever afterward held in the literature and the religious life of the nation.

But that is not all. This wonderful psalmody, like religion itself, whose essential spirit so richly pervaded it, could

not be confined to the people with whom it originated. Its music sounded forth through all the earth. It is a part of the worship of every sect of every race to which the Bible is the word of God. It is read, privately and publicly in hundreds of languages. Ministers and congregations recite its responses, and sing together the hymns and anthems which are largely but paraphrases of its ancient songs. For the God it praises is the same, and the needs and experiences of the soul are the same, in all ages and in all lands.

Charm of drama.

The Book of Job is a progressive study of the mystery of suffering, not in the abstract but in the concrete. It presents to us, in the form of a religious drama, the case of a godly man, happy, prosperous and respected, overwhelmed by sudden calamity, robbed of his property, bereft of his children, tortured by physical suffering, misunderstood by his friends, subjected to unjust suspicion, misdirected sympathy and impertinent exhortations, all by permission of God and under the instigation of the devil.

The problem of the book is the relation of trial to character, the causes and remedies of suffering in general, and of Job's

sufferings in particular. On this subject four different theories are proposed.

Satan's theory is that there is no such thing as disinterested piety, that men follow a godly life for what they can get out of it, and that any man's religion can be broken down by calamity.

The theory of Job's wife is that trial is the vindictiveness of God, and a sufficient reason for a man's renouncing his religion, and meeting the unjust assault with defiance and cursing.

The theory of Job's three fellow patriarchs, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, is that suffering is a punishment for sin, and therefore a proof of it. The discussion of this dogma mainly occupies the dialogues between them and Job. In the course of this discussion they utter many wise, true and beautiful things, chiefly in the form of those proverbial sayings, of which people, especially Oriental people, are so fond, and from which it is so easy to draw illogical conclusions. It is in view of this feature of the book that it has been classed with the so-called wisdom literature of the Hebrews.

The theory of the young Eliphaz is, that, while trials are brought upon men by wrong-doing, they are not so much punitive

as disciplinary, being intended to lead the transgressor to repentance and reformation. His observations are less sagacious and less impressive than those of the older men; but his conclusions are nearer the truth, and mark a progressive step in the study of the problem under discussion.

Job repudiates all of these theories, but proposes none of his own. He admits moral imperfection, but does not regard it as accounting for his present condition. He sees no way of accounting for it. He is dismayed and overwhelmed at finding himself treated in this way by the God whom he has so long served, and who has heretofore been so good to him. Worn with pain and grief, wearied by the platitudes of his friends, resenting their accusations and insinuations, he is not always amiable or patient. But he clings to his faith, and prays for a fuller revelation of God, and a closer contact with his presence. The appeals of the badgered, bewildered man are pathetic, beyond expression. But his views of essential truth are clear, and are given with wonderful force and eloquence. The rhapsody on wisdom in the thirty-eighth chapter is scarcely surpassed by any passage in biblical or any other

literature, for sublimity of thought or beauty of expression.

At last Jehovah speaks. He makes no statement of the philosophy of his government, and no explanation of his dealings with Job. He tells the three theorizers that they have not, and that Job has "spoken the thing that is right." He answers Job's prayer for a fuller revelation of himself—of his wisdom, which is too deep for man's comprehension, of his power, which is too vast for man's computation.

Grandeur of God's view.

This grander view of his Maker humbles Job, but strengthens his faith. His fretfulness and his complainings cease. He forgets his pain, his bereavements and his anguish of spirit, and loses himself in wonder and adoration. He no longer cries, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" but, "Now mine eye seeth thee." Then Jehovah, having disproved Satan's contention, and silenced the disputatious moralists, compensates the patriarch twice over for all his afflictions, and blesses his latter end more than his beginning.

Bible students are divided in opinion as to the proper classification of the book

of Job. Some regard it as historical, some as allegorical, some as belonging to an intermediate class, a sort of expanded parable, founded on the life of an actual hero of the patriarchal age. The question is an interesting one, but its discussion would be out of place here. Nor would its settlement be of importance to our present line of study. Fact or fiction, the book is a remarkable piece of literature, beautiful in style, thrilling in dramatic interest, and rich in wisdom and instruction. Job's conception of God and of God's relation to men and things not only astonishes us by its clearness and maturity, but has done much to clarify the views of believers everywhere; while his patience, his trustfulness, his self-control, his steadfastness under temptation, and the sweet serenity of a chastened and beautiful spirit, have made him a help and an inspiration to the great sorrowing multitude that no man can number.

Let the reader scan again the pages of this wonderful book, and see for how many notable texts, and for how many cardinal religious ideas, he is indebted to the book of Job.

The Book of Proverbs teaches the science and the art of right living.

> "To know wisdom and instruction;
> To discern the words of understanding;
> To receive instruction in wise dealing,
> In righteousness and justice and equity."

It does not argue the matter, but states, in a series of didactic propositions, the maturest experience of the worthiest men, the results of the best thinking of the wisest men; and exhorts all other people to accept these conclusions and follow these examples.

The form adopted is poetical; and it makes large use of parallelism, especially of the antithetical type, or parallelism by contrasted ideas, a form well adapted to this kind of composition.

> "The memory of the righteous is blessed;
> But the name of the wicked shall rot."

Meaning of term.

The English title of the Book of Proverbs is partly, but not altogether descriptive. The term proverb is too limited to denote all the forms of proposition used in this book. The Hebrew equivalent, *mashal* denotes not only the proverb proper, but the fable, the allegory, the parable, and other modes of presenting truth by similarity or contrast of ideas. Yet a

large part of the contents of the book consists of proverbs in the proper sense of the term, namely, those terse, sententious, incisive sayings found in all literatures, the condensed product of centuries of thought and experience, constituting a store of ready-made and ready-at-hand wisdom, so largely used, and so liable to be misused by all classes of men.

Wisdom.

The subject of the book is Wisdom, not theoretical but practical. It assumes that wisdom is of priceless value to all men, and that the test of wisdom is its effect upon its possessor. The initial proposition of the book is, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This was not a new proposition to the Hebrew mind. It is the climax of that marvelous discourse upon wisdom in the twenty-eighth chapter of Job, and of the devout meditation upon the works of God in the one-hundred and eleventh Psalm. We may take it, therefore, as the accepted definition of the kind of wisdom which it is the purpose of the Book of Proverbs to expound and commend.

The fear of God, as the expression is used in the Old Testament, is not the fear that repels, but the fear that attracts, not

the terror that cowers and trembles before the awfulness of the divine majesty, but the adoring reverence that trusts, and worships and obeys. Such fear of God is wisdom because it is based upon a right conception of God's character and will. It is wisdom because it leads to the embodiment and expression of that will in human character, and in the motives, words and actions of daily life.

It is as broad as human life. Every interest and every duty of man comes within its range, and may, therefore, be the proper subject of a proverb. It deals with the snares set for the feet of the young; the deceitfulness of all allurements to evil; the hatefulness of lust, malice, envy, treachery, deceit, injustice, laziness, pride; the advantages of virtue, beneficence, sympathy, purity, filial piety, honest labor, fair dealing, generosity; the substantial, symmetrical, beautiful character of the wise man; the absurdities, the idiocies, the moral deformities of the "fool."

Proverbs for all ages.

We cannot but be struck with the perfect appropriateness of these precepts to present-day life. Had they been written in our time, and for our time, they could not more completely fit our needs, or offer

more salutary rules for our guidance. How many of them have passed into the proverbial philosophy of the world!

"If sinners entice thee, consent thou not."
"Go to the ant, thou sluggard."
"I" [wisdom] "love them that love me."
"The blessing of Jehovah, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow therewith."
"A soft answer turneth away wrath."
"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."
"The heart knoweth its own bitterness."
"A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance."
"Pride goeth before destruction."
"A whisperer separateth chief friends."
"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty."
"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."
"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver."

Thus we find that much of what we call common sense was possessed by men who lived ages before us, and was put by them into convenient form for ready use, a sort of mental coinage, shaped and certified and ready for circulation. Wisdom changes its subject-matter and its applications, but it does not change its nature. Neither do those world-old principles of human conduct change in which wisdom is embodied.

The personal element in the proverbs helps to lift them out of the atmosphere of abstract truth, and gives them the effect

of a direct utterance of a living voice. Now it is a father admonishing a son. Now it is a son recalling his mother's words. Now it is personified Wisdom herself, standing in the ways of human life, and uttering her voice to those that pass by.

Perhaps the most impressive of the utterances of this discreet oracle is that passage in the first chapter in which Wisdom warns men that if they do not heed her when she calls upon them, she will not heed them when they call upon her:

> "Because I have called, and ye have refused;
> I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded."
> "I also will laugh in the day of your calamity;
> I will mock when your fear cometh."

As wisdom, heeded and obeyed, brings its own reward, so unwisdom, adopted and practiced, brings its own punishment. The wayward soul turns at last upon itself, revenges itself upon its possessor, and receives in itself the penalty of its own folly and sin. This is sound theology, and true to the experience of men.

Glory of woman.

The eulogy upon the virtuous woman in the closing chapter, "the oracle" taught king Lemuel by his mother, is the most charming discourse in the book, and one of the most beautiful tributes to noble woman-

hood in all literature. It is a summing up of the various virtues commended in the previous chapters, and their harmonious combination in a single character. That character the preacher found precisely where the world has ever found it, in the pure, strong, loving, unselfish wife and mother. She it is who stands as a perpetual rebuke of all that is sordid and mean, and a charming teacher and example of the art of right living.

> "Give her of the fruit of her hands;
> And let her works praise her in the gates."

The Book of Ecclesiastes, though not put into poetical form, in our English translations, is poetical in spirit, and has often been so classed, along with the three books that precede it. It is closely allied to the Book of Proverbs in its general character and purpose, and like that book, belongs to the so-called wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

The book may be called a progressive study of the philosophy of life. Biblical scholars do not know whether its Hebrew title, *Koholeth,* denotes the speaker, the audience addressed, or the discourse delivered to them. All three are present, and they constitute the main features of the book.

Is life worth living?

The author begins with a sweeping assertion of the vanity of human life and the fruitlessness of human endeavor. He has tried it, he says, and has exhausted every form of activity and of pleasure, has tasted all the delights of knowledge, studied the processes and the results of enterprise, has seen how men live and how they act in the most responsible positions in life, and has discovered that there is no satisfaction in it all. He demands to know what a man can get out of it that is worth while, what permanent result, that will outlast the work and outlive the man.

As his study goes on, he begins to discover some things that are worth while. The passing joy of life is worth while, fleeting as it is. It is worth while to study the ways of God with the world and the people who are in it. It is worth while to do good, to live for others and not for one's self, for permanent ends, rather than for the passing moment, and with reference to duty and eternity, instead of to short-lived pleasures. Out of all his seeming pessimism and cynicism, he breaks, in the last chapter, into a rhapsody on life and death, the thanatopsis of Old Testament poetry, and, as a skilful preacher should

do, brings in his conclusion as the climax of his discourse: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The Song of Songs is a poetical puzzle, the despair of critics and commentators. Is it a collection of more or less independent songs? Is it a cantata, representing the winning of a bride by the king? Is it a lyrical drama, in which he is seen wooing a rustic maiden, who repels his suit, and clings with passionate constancy to her humbler lover? Is it an allegorical picture of the love of Jehovah and his ancient people, or of the love of Christ and his church? Each supposition has its advocates; and the prospect of agreement is as remote as ever.

Poem of love.

Of certain things concerning it, however, there is no doubt. It is a poem of love; and its admission to the Old Testament canon is a recognition of love as one of the holy things in human life, the inspiration and joy of pure souls, fit to be conjoined with gladdest hope and strongest faith in that triad of abiding virtues of which, it is not only the greatest but the sweetest, the most potent and the most eternal.

CHAPTER XV.

THE INSPIRED STORY-BOOK.

Graphic narratives.

SURVEYING the Old Testament as a whole, we cannot but be struck with the large use it makes of the narrative form; another proof of its adaptation to the human mind, and its fitness to win the attention and to awaken and sustain the interest of all classes of readers. The first seventeen books, from Genesis to Esther, constituting one half of the entire volume, are historical narratives. Job and the Song of Songs are dramatic narratives. Many of the Psalms are poetic narratives. Most of Ezekiel and Daniel, large portions of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and some portions of several of the lesser books are of the same character. The prophecies often take on the narrative form; prophetic prediction, as has been pointed out in a previous chapter, is but history written in advance.

Moreover, the biblical narratives are of that most fascinating sort, stories about people. Bible history is not a dull chronicle of events, but a series of biographical sketches of interesting persons, around whom are grouped such facts as relate primarily to their personal affairs, and with them to the general movements of which they are a part. Thus the Old Testament brings before us, as in a moving picture, a living world, peopled with real men and women, and lets us see what they do, and hear what they say, in the every-day scenes of their lives. But the most interesting of these personal narratives are neither history nor biography in the ordinary sense of the terms, but just little heart-to-heart tales of common life, in which, whatever the remote relations and purposes of things may be, the reader's interest is concentrated for the time being upon the actors themselves. Let us note the striking features of some of these stories.

Sowing and reaping.

The Story of Jacob, for instance, is an example of a story with a moral. Here are parental mistakes, bad advice, a father deceived, a brother wronged, fraud overreaching itself; success that does not succeed, sin punished in kind, cheating for

cheating, lie for lie, filial wrong for filial wrong, God alone compassionate, his promise unbroken, night luminous with angel faces, the life of sorrow encompassed with blessing, the chastened heart filled at last with divine peace.

Triumph of virtue.

The Story of Joseph is a sequel of the foregoing, and an example of the story with a complicated plot. The hero wins our heart at the outset. We are charmed by his boyish innocence and candor. We are grieved at his wrongs and misfortunes. Everything goes against him. Instead of the conventional villain, are nine villains, plotting his destruction. From the position of favorite son in a rich household, he passes to that of a prisoner, a piece of merchandise, a slave; transported to a far-off country, sold for money, lost among the millions of slave-masses.

All seems lost. But in the course of time, by virtue and fidelity, he rises from his degradation to a position of trust and honor. Thence, through false accusation, he is dragged down again, thrown into prison, a disgraced and despised convict. Now, surely, all is lost. But no, once more he emerges, wins the king's favor, becomes prime minister, the saviour of

Egypt and the protector and benefactor of his own family and race.

The making of a leader.

The Story of Moses, is a sequel to that of Joseph, and even more wonderful in the social contrasts it presents, and in the strange development of events. Another slave, this time a born slave, is taken into royal favor, becomes an Egyptian prince by adoption, but preserves his national faith and his love of race, renounces his courtly position, becomes an exile, a shepherd, a prophet, a deliverer, and under God the creator of a nation.

Strength and weakness.

The Story of Samson is the story of a physical phenomenon. With the abstemiousness and self-discipline of a Nazarite, he combines the passions and excesses of a libertine. He is the subject of that type of inspiration whose effect is not mental or spiritual, but physical, and under whose influence he performs the prodigious feats of an insane giant. Ruined by the weakness of his own nature, he avenges himself in a momentary return of power, and perishes with his enemies.

An heroic farmer.

The Story of Gideon is the story of a plain farmer, changed into a great leader, a modest, self-distrustful, General Grant sort of man, thrust by destiny into the

front rank of political and military responsibility, achieving miracles of success under divine guidance, but finally lapsing into disgraceful failure through his own folly and inconstancy.

A diamond in the rough.

The Story of Jephthah is the story of patriotic zeal and heroism in a crude, untamed, vindictive nature. Its chief element of interest, and that which has made it the theme of poetry and art, is the piteous, heart-breaking, and wholly inexplicable tragedy of Jephthah's daughter, to whose fate we can never become reconciled.

God against man.

The Story of David and Goliath is a story of the balance of forces, right against wrong, faith in divine power against faith in human strength, the God-fearing lad against the pagan giant, the smooth stone from the brook against sword and spear and armor of steel. God is not always, as the great conqueror maintained, "with the strongest battalions." Or, let us rather say, the strongest battalions are those that have him on their side. His champions and heroes are often imperfect, fallible, erring men; but all the more clearly do they reveal the sufficiency of that grace which is made perfect in weakness.

The Stories of Daniel and his fellow

The captain victorious.

captives in Babylon present to us heroes and achievements of a different type. These men do not fight, or lead the fighting legions of their nation, they have no prestige, no social influence, no fair chance in life; they are exiles, captives, slaves. But they are moral heroes, and meet triumphantly great moral ordeals, and trials of courage.

The book of Daniel is the battle-ground of criticism, verbal and literary, as to its date, its authorship, its historic statements, its prophetic character, the meaning of its strange imagery, the interpretation of its enigmatical numbers and predictions. But whatever view may be taken upon these points, the book will always stand as a wonderful portraiture of that type of moral courage which is superior to all temptation and all danger; and as an exhibition of that divine grace through which the captive vanquishes his captors, and the slave is greater than the king.

Slave, queen, heroine.

The Story of Esther is another story with a complicated plot, intensely dramatic, but on a less elevated moral plane. A beautiful Jewess, winning the crown in a humiliating competitive contest, developing, under the stress of responsibility,

from a mere beauty to a strong heroic woman; a grand old Jew, her uncle, keeping with her the secret of her nationality, but openly displaying his own; the Persian prime minister Haman, the villain of the story, preparing a gallows for Mordecai and a general massacre for his fellow Hebrews, under royal decree; the plot discovered by Mordecai and frustrated by Esther, at the peril of her own life; Mordecai's past services recalled by the king; public honors paid him; Haman hung on his own gallows, and the Jews changed from victims into executioners. We should be glad to see God's people less vindictive, but we cannot wish the self-destruction of Haman less complete.

A Syrian love story.

The Story of Isaac and Rebecca begins the series of biblical love stories, unless indeed, we may regard them as having begun in the garden of Eden. It is one of the clear proofs of the completeness of the Bible as a representation of human life, and its universal adaptation to the experiences and the needs of men, that it has given us glimpses here and there of those tender scenes where the ever-old, ever-new romance of life is enacted. It is a sign also of the sacredness, in God's sight,

of those affections which draw and bind together the hearts of men and women in all lands and in all ages.

Isaac does his wooing vicariously, according to Oriental etiquette. Abraham sends his head servant five hundred miles away to secure a bride of the right lineage and degree. The servant makes it a subject of prayer, and for his unmistakable guidance, agrees with the Lord upon a method of identifying the maiden he seeks. She must be of a certain family; she must come forth from a specified gate for a specified purpose; Eleazer is to address her so and so, and she is to answer so and so. A most complicated test, and one which upon any calculation of probabilities, is almost certain to fail. But it is fulfilled to the letter. Both she and her family agree with the servant in regarding the signs as providential and conclusive; and she returns with him, to become the wife of the waiting Isaac and the mother of the chosen race.

No doubt this idyllic love-story was often rehearsed in the delighted ears of Hebrew youths and maidens. The well-known incident and other interesting features of the scene were repeated, with

some improvements, in the love-making of Jacob, in the same country, possibly at the same well, where he kissed the beautiful Rachel at their first cousinly interview, and again at the meeting of Moses and Zipporah at the shepherds' watering-place in Midian.

Idyl of Ruth.

The Story of Ruth has been called the most perfect short story ever written. It certainly was not written in competition for that distinction, nor in conformity to the modern canons of short-story art; but it has features of extraordinary interest; some of which are not possessed by any other story ever written. It begins with profoundest sorrow, a threefold widowhood, heart-breaking separations, a choice between two hard alternatives, the sad exile turning her face homeward, the devoted daughter, exiling herself for love's sake. The two come to Bethlehem, kindly welcomed, but weary, desolate and poor. Poverty drives the fair Ruth to the ranks of the gleaners in the harvest-field. Unconsciously she wins the attention and good opinion of the master of the field. Naomi furnishes some matronly counsel, and the docile Ruth, under favor of the strange customs of the country, converts her bene-

factor into a lover. Other customs, that jeopardize his suit, and hold him temporarily in suspense, turn in his favor. The rest is just as we would have it. The cloud of sorrow gives place to the brightness of joy, poverty to wealth, the desolate life to the shelter and peace of home.

Significance of the story.

But all this, interesting as it is, is not the most notable aspect of this beautiful romance. Ruth was not a Hebrew girl, but an alien, and her marriage to Boaz, like the marriage of Rahab of Jericho to his father Salmon, was an exception to the Hebrew law of exclusiveness, and showed that that law did not operate to prevent marriages intrinsically desirable. The noble, the virtuous, the godly of any race, were welcome on their merits to all the privileges of God's people. Moreover, Boaz was the historical ancestor of David and the whole royal line of Judah, and therefore of the coming Messiah, in whose veins flowed not only the blood of twenty Hebrew kings, but the blood of the Canaanite Rahab and the Moabite Ruth; as if to teach in advance his kinship to the Gentiles, the many-sidedness, the every-sidedness of his humanity, and the universality of his kingdom.

The story has taken us back across three-fourths of a millennium of Hebrew history and literary production, but it furnishes us a fitting stopping place for our studies of Old Testament Scripture. For it brings us again to the central point in their thought, the great unifying and creative purpose of Hebrew institutions, the theme of symbol and prophecy, song and story, the coming Kingdom of Heaven. In these same fields of Bethlehem, where Ruth gleaned and Boaz dreamed, we shall find the sleeping shepherds, and hear the song that hails the coming of Mary's son, and Ruth's. The "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VOICELESS CENTURIES.

We have now closed our brief survey of the more striking and attractive features of the Old Testament Scriptures, and our study of the elements of their power over the minds and the lives of men. Between the writing of the last page of the Old Testament and the first page of the New, four centuries are commonly believed to have intervened. But, though this period added nothing to the volume of authentic Scripture, it did much to enhance the value of the Scriptures already possessed, to give them distinction among the literatures of the world, and to prepare the way for the still more important revelations which were to follow. A glance at this epoch, therefore will help us both to appreciate the treasures and the beauties of the Scriptures and to note the extent of their influence upon devout minds.

It was a memorable epoch, or series of epochs, in Jewish history, and in the history of mankind. Three of the great world-powers symbolized by the composite image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as described in the book of Daniel, had successively dominated western Asia. After the golden splendor of Babylon came the silver refinement of Medo-Persia; then the brazen but tarnished and deceptive glitter of Greek sovereignty, and then the hard, relentless, but already corroded and deteriorating iron of Rome. Decay of splendor.

The Jewish history of the period is interesting but not illustrious. The captives who returned to Palestine under the permission and protection of their Persian master, were subject to the caprices and the changing fortunes of the successive empires that followed him. For a little while, under the lead of the great patriot and champion, Judas Maccabæus, the old national spirit and the old national faith flamed again, and a degree of independence was secured. Then the iron hand of Cæsar was laid upon the land and people, and Palestine became a Roman province. Yet this period of political humiliation proved to be particularly favorable to the

interests of religious literature. The very fact that no contemporary prophet was present to bring the people a message of current import, turned them with more devout attention to the revelations of the past. Never had the Hebrew Scriptures been so thoroughly studied. The idolatry which had once led to the neglect of the divine law had been forever abandoned; and the conviction that the neglect of the divine law had occasioned the national ruin wrought in the public mind a deep reverence for the sacred oracles.

Revival of learning.

It was an era of learning. Within its limits the classic literatures enjoyed their golden age, and the Oriental literatures attained reputation and power. Both were promotive of Scripture study. The spirit of scholarly enthusiasm was in the air. Of the Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages in which the original Scriptures had been written, as well as the Greek, the language of universal scholarship, the Jewish rabbis were consummate masters.

Old Testament canon.

Four literary achievements of this period are of notable interest to the biblical student, and of momentous importance to the religious faith of the world. The first was the fixing of the *Old Testament canon,*

that is the identification and arrangement in one systematic and authentic collection of the Hebrew Scriptures, as recognized by the Jews themselves. The canon thus established is, so far as its contents are concerned, substantially that which is accepted by the Christian church to-day; though the order of arrangement is different in some respects.

The Septuagint.

The second great achievement of the period was the translation of these Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, in the version called *the Septuagint,* a work of profound and reverent scholarship, by men who had an exhaustive knowledge of both languages, and while both were yet living tongues. The translators took some liberties with the canon; but their additions were readily distinguished and eliminated. The canonical remainder of their translation was the Old Testament of common speech in their time, and in New Testament times; and it was from it that most of the quotations cited by Jesus and the apostles were taken.

Apocrypha.

The third notable work of this period was the production of the collection of writings known to us as the *Old Testament Apocrypha,* works of great literary and historic merit, and written in a spirit

so thoroughly biblical, that some of them were included in the Septuagint, as above noted, and all of them are inserted in some English editions. They have never, however, won general recognition as canonical Scripture from either Jewish or Christian critics. Their value is in the light they throw on Hebrew thought and Hebrew life during the period which has no contemporaneous representation in Scripture.

Josephus.

The fourth and the latest literary achievement of that period bearing upon our theme was the *Works of Josephus* the great Jewish historian, whose writings have been for nineteen hundred years not only the standard authority upon Hebrew antiquities, but an invaluable source of information upon a multitude of biblical questions.

When we consider what those four things mean to the Bible student, and the extent to which they both reveal and enhance the attractions of the Bible, we cannot doubt that such indirect aids to the interpretation of Scripture are a part of the same divine plan of which the gift of Scripture itself is another part. The Spirit that reveals the message to the messenger and puts its words into his

mouth, prepares the generations of men to receive it, and sets in motion all the agencies necessary to its most effective use. And sometimes it comes to pass that the interests of revelation may be best served by silencing the contemporary prophet, and compelling the believer to search anew the divine treasures already in his possession, to listen more intently to the voices of the past, and to find out those meanings and applications of revealed truths which both fit the life of his time and are interpreted by it. We are conscious, therefore, of no rude break in the providential movement of events, as we pass over these four centuries, but of the same continuity of history, and of the operation of the same divine power, to fulfil the same divine will, for the same beneficent and spiritual ends, as in the millenniums that had gone before. Moreover, as we near the close of this intermediate era, we see unmistakable signs of preparation for some greater era to come. God gives to the Romans the work of material and intellectual preparation. He raises them to the military and political supremacy of the world. He sets them to making roads, and building ships, and encouraging commerce and travel;

The Romans.

founding universities and diffusing literature; so that, if a man have an errand to any part of the empire, from the Tiber to the Nile, from Persia to the Gates of Hercules, he can go his way expeditiously and safely, and without change of government or language.

The spiritual preparation is no less remarkable. The Jew, growing more and more restless under the domination of the great pagan tyranny, is finding new meanings in the Messianic prophecies; and the devout and prayerful of all nations find a divine prophecy in their own heart-yearnings and desires.

Here, then, is revelation without voice or language, prophecy without a prophet, the stir and thrill in innumerable souls that foretells the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Surely, "this is Jehovah's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

CHAPTER XVII.

OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION CONTINUED IN THE NEW.

Among the many attractions of Scripture brought to our attention in our Old Testament studies, one of the most impressive is the unity and continuity of revelation. The various parts, contributed by so many different men, in such widely-separated periods of time, and in such variety of form and style, yet have a common theme, and a common purpose, and are fitted together into one harmonious whole.

Charm of unity.

And when we turn from the Old Testament to the New, we find the same unity and continuity of revelation, the same great truths, the same great purpose, the inspiration of the same divine Spirit, the fuller and more glorious self-expression of the same God, joining the Jewish Scriptures to the Christian, and compacting all

into a single volume of revelation. This is itself no inconsiderable attraction, and helps in no small degree to make other attractions effective. It is to the sacred volume what the plot is to a story or a drama, shaping all facts and incidents into a chain of intelligent and purposeful causation, and giving to every action a definite meaning and direction, with reference to a predetermined end.

A Geographical Unity connects the New Testament with the Old. We find ourselves again in the same small country in which the Old Testament left us, and in which the chief events of its history took place. Here are Lebanon and Carmel and Gilead. Here are the Jordan and the Salt Sea. Here are Shechem and Mizpah, Joppa and Gaza, Hebron and little Bethlehem, and grand old Jerusalem. Here Joshua's armies marched, and Gideon's battles were fought. Here Elijah and Isaiah preached and David and Solomon were crowned. Here the cruel invader swept in, and the processions of weeping captives went out. Everywhere we are on historic ground.

An Ethnical Unity connects the two Testaments. We find ourselves among people

of the same race, the same nation, keeping up the same tribal divisions, honoring the same saints and heroes, observing the same feasts and sacrifices, in a temple built upon the same model, on the same foundations, on the same "Holy Hill." The genealogies with which two of the evangelists begin their gospels are striking indications of this unity. Indeed it seems not impossible that this consideration, not less than that of establishing the royal legitimacy of Jesus, may account for the insertion of these family details, which, like the genealogies of the Old Testament, are probably regarded by few readers as among the attractions of the Bible. Really they have great interest and significance; they carry us back to the beginning of the ancestral line, and trace it downward, from generation to generation, not only to the close of the prophetic period, but across the voiceless centuries, to the maiden of Nazareth and the babe of Bethlehem; thus they establish one more line of connection between the opening era and the historic past.

Of unbroken thought.

The Unbroken Continuity of Thought is, however, the strongest bond of all, and the most significant from our present point

of view, as revealing the common origin, inspiration and authority of the two Testaments.

The attractions of the Old Testament, pointed out at the beginning of these studies, may be divided into three classes: the attractions of a great literature, the attractions of great lives, and the attractions of great ideas.* The third division includes the other two. The Old Testament literature is notable because of the notable ideas which it embodies. The lives of Old Testament saints are illustrious because of the ennobling ideas which they illustrate. The ideas themselves are great because of their inherent truth and power, emanating from the mind of God, and dominating the minds and hearts and lives of men.

It will be worth our while, therefore, to recall some of these dominant ideas of the Old Testament, that we may see how naturally they passed over into the new dispensation, not only surviving in the system of Christian truth, but developing a fresh vitality and beauty in its atmosphere.

The idea of God.

The Old Testament Conception of God is one of these great ideas, and one that is not only masterful and creative in the

* See pages 13, 14.

domain of human thought, but absolutely unique among the religions of men. The unity, the omnipresence, the omniscience, the omnipotence of God, the majestic solitude of his being, his absolute sovereignty in the universe, his moral perfections, perfect holiness, perfect justice, perfect benevolence, perfect truth, all of which are essential and matter-of-course attributes in the biblical conception, are impossible in a pagan god. Every pagan pantheon has its chief god. Chaldea had its Il, Assyria had its Re, Greece had its Zeus. But an infinite god, a supreme god, a perfect god, cannot exist in a polytheistic system. Jehovah alone is such a God. The very conception was ennobling to the Hebrew mind, and a splendid bequest of Judaism to Christianity. The reality, whether to Jew or Christian, is faith's strong foundation, its Rock of Ages.

Conception of nature.

The Hebrew Conception of God in Nature is another of the dominant ideas of the Old Testament carried over into the New. According to that conception, Jehovah not only created the material world, but is in perpetual contact with it. The constant outflowing of energy from him

is the universal force. He upholds all things, controls, guides, operates all things, by the direct exercise of his power. Sun and stars shine at his command, the thunder is his voice, the winds are his breath, the beauty of the world is his gift and his delight. His heart responds to the needs of every sentient creature, to the hunger of the young lion in his lair, and the cry of the eaglet in his nest. "Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Jesus presents with wonderful force and beauty this same view of the direct personal and beneficent activity of God in his world. It is our Father who "maketh his sun to rise" who "sendeth rain," who "clothes" the lilies in their more than royal vesture, who "feedeth" the birds, and without whom not even a half-penny sparrow "shall fall to the ground."

Divine providence.

The Hebrew Conception of Divine Providence, as related to mankind corresponds with that of his relation to the lower orders of creation. God is the greatest and most potent reality in every human life. He has to do with all its details. The health of men is in his hand. He orders the good man's steps. His people are the

sheep of his pasture, and he is their shepherd, to lead, to feed, to defend. They are his children, and he is their father, loving, sympathizing, sheltering, cherishing, endowing them with riches, chastening them with sorrow, glad when they are good, grieved when they sin, patient, long suffering, forgiving. He maintains a living intercourse with them. He takes them into his fellowship, they call and he answers. All this and more Jesus puts into his representation of the Father. From the divine care over the birds, he bids us infer safety and blessing for ourselves. "Shall he not much more clothe you?" "Are ye not much better than they?" By the impulses of parental love in the heart of the human father, he interprets to us the infinitely greater love of the Father in heaven.

God in national life.

The Conception of God in National Affairs is another characteristic Old Testament idea of immense influence upon Hebrew thought. We have already had occasion to note this conception, both in the messages of the prophets by whom it is so explicitly stated, and in the records of national history, in which it is so amply illustrated. Its doctrine is that God is

sovereign among nations as absolutely as among the forces of nature, or the events of individual human life; that while he allows rulers and nations liberty of action within certain limits, he determines precisely what those limits shall be, and sees that they are not passed; that his law is as binding upon men in their public relations as in their private conduct; that he will hold them to a strict accountability, and that when the existence of a nation no longer makes for the good of the race and for the fulfilment of the great purposes of Jehovah toward mankind, he will overthrow and destroy it.

The Old Testament is largely filled with historic and prophetic commentaries upon this doctrine, and the ruins of the great empires of antiquity are melancholy monuments of its truth. The doctrine has not been annulled by Christianity, nor discredited by modern history, and its lessons may well be taken to heart by the rulers and the political philosophers of our time.

Moral ideals.

The Old Testament Conception of Personal Morality is another of those constructive ideas which exerted so potent an influence upon the Hebrew character, individual and national, and which has done

so much to shape the ethical ideals of mankind. It was outlined for them in their law, enforced in all their literature, and exemplified in every holy character that lived among them. The book of Proverbs reviewed in a previous chapter, is an exposition of this conception; and such passages as the thirty-first chapter of Job, summarize the virtues which comprise it. It calls for thoughtfulness, conscientiousness, purity, self-control, truth, honesty, justice, magnanimity, charity, beneficence, kindness, sympathy, patience, family affections, and whatever else is included in a symmetrical moral character.

Religion, Morals and Law.

The Identity of Morals and Religion is an aspect of biblical ethics not to be lost sight of in this connection. Paganism attributed immorality to its gods, and included immoral rites in its worship. The Bible reveals to us an infinitely holy God, and bids us be holy because he is holy, perfect as he is perfect. Nor does it stop with the morality of outward acts, but demands that holiness of heart, that religious habit of thought, that culture of the deeper spiritual nature which fits men for fellowship with God, and from which the outward graces of godliness spring spon-

taneously, as flowers by the water-courses. It is here especially, that Christianity is enriched with the bequests of Hebrew ethics and theology, and that the older conceptions of truth and character blend most naturally with the later. On this point Jesus speaks with no uncertain sound, "Think not," he says, "that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." The law, the prophets and the sacred writings were the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures, and according to the Hebrew habit of expression, the first of the three terms, or the first and second, might denote the whole collection. Note then our Lord's use of this abbreviated title, and his twofold assertion, the negative and the positive.

Moral principles indestructible.

He "came not to Destroy the Law," of which he declares in the next sentence that "one jot"—the least letter of the alphabet—"or one tittle"—a mere dot or point—is more enduring than the universe; meaning as his succeeding discourse upon the subject clearly shows, not the trivial outward signs, but the momentous thing signified, that divinely constructed fabric of moral principles on which the

law rests, and which, having come from God, is in every least item of essential truth as unperishable as his throne. Jesus did not come to destroy this, and he consigns the man who violates or dishonors it to the lowest rank of moral delinquents, "least in the kingdom of heaven."

Revelation permanent.

He came not to Destroy the Prophets, that is, to deny or weaken any of those divine truths, and those revelations of the divine will which the prophets, under the direct inspiration of the Spirit, make known to men. God will not contradict himself. What he thought and felt and willed in Ezekiel's time, or in Isaiah's, so far as the fundamentals of truth or of moral obligations are concerned, he thinks and feels and wills to-day. This is not inconsistent with progress; it is a condition of it. The most progressive science rests on a foundation of fact and law which never changes, and without which progress would be impossible. The astronomer discovers new stars, but the old law of gravitation remains the same. The inventor finds new applications of electric force, but the nature of electricity does not change. So in the moral and spiritual realm, new conditions arise; new applications of truth

are necessary; but truth itself does not change. The nature of virtue does not change; therefore Jesus did not come to destroy the law which requires it, or the revelations of the prophets, who expound and enforce it.

Fulfilment.

But that is not all. He does not stop with a mere negative concerning the permanence of the older revelation. He assumes a positive attitude even more significant. "I came not to destroy, *but to fulfil*," he says; and this fulfilment he grandly accomplishes. He fulfils the law by his perfect obedience to its precepts, and his complete exemplification of its spirit. What had become a form of words becomes in him a living and beautiful reality. He fulfils it by being that which its forms and symbols typify. The law sets up a system of types, a great composite picture of something infinitely greater than itself. He is that greater reality, the antitype of those types. The law provides a system of sacrifices recognizing human sin, and signifying divine mercy and forgiveness. He is the one infinite sacrifice, "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

He fulfils the Prophets, that is, the pro-

phetic revelations which they uttered. The prophets proclaim great truths; he illustrates them. The prophets reveal the mind of God; he reveals God himself. The prophets denounce sin; he expiates it. They preach divine love; he personifies it. They predict a Messianic kingdom; he is the Messiah and the King. They portray an age of world-wide grace and evangelism; he inaugurates it.

No wonder that the evangelists so often speak of the incidents and the acts of his life as a fulfilment of the Scripture. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." No wonder that Jesus himself so often uses the same expression, and that the words of the Old Testament are so often upon his lips. His mind is saturated with it; every experience illustrates it, and is a living and perpetual fulfilment. Not only the law and the Prophets, in the narrow sense, but every great biblical idea has some relation to him, and finds some fulfilment in him. History is one grand providential movement in preparation for him. Kings come and go with unconscious reference to his kingdom. Empires rise and fall that his empire may be established forever. Seers

dream dreams about him. Poets sing psalms in his honor. Centuries, epochs, millenniums of human life focus themselves upon him, and pour their light, like a halo of glory, around his head.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF GOSPEL HISTORY.

THE Christian Scriptures appeal to us through the same three elements of interest which constitute the attractiveness of the Old Testament—great truths, great lives and a great literature.

The Gospels.

Evidently God thought it worth while to make the later revelation attractive, as he had made the earlier, from a literary point of view. There is a manifest providence in the very language in which the New Testament is written. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the greatest service the Greek language ever performed for mankind was in becoming the medium through which the Holy Scriptures, first of the Old Testament and then of the New, were given to men. The wealth of its vocabulary, its capacity for expressing exact shades of meaning, and its wide diffusion among people of all races and conditions,

made it the fittest speech in the world into which to translate the ancient Hebrew writings, and in which to write the Christian Scriptures, and out of which to translate them into every tongue and dialect under heaven.

Variety and individuality.

The varieties of literary types, style and authorship found in the New Testament are not so numerous as in the Old. Yet they are manifold and striking, and the diversities which they present add greatly to the interest, and therefore to the value and influence of those Scriptures. As in the case of the Hebrew writers, each man's individuality is preserved unimpaired, under whatever influence of the Holy Spirit he wrote. This human element is not only compatible with divine inspiration, but is the very basis of it, and the means of proving its reality and enhancing its power. No two books were written under the same conditions, or with precisely the same purpose in view. Consequently we find widely dissimilar features in different books by the same author, or in the writings of different authors upon the same subject. So minutely does God attend to what may be called the elements of popularity in sacred literature.

He has still further popularized the New Testament, as he had previously popularized the Old, by selecting for a large part of it the most interesting literary form, the story. More than one-half of the volume, and that the most vital and influential part, consists of narratives; and its narratives, like those of the Old Testament, are largely personal and biographical; though we have, here as there, no complete or continued biography. Even in the stories about Jesus, we get only occasional glimpses of scenes and incidents in his wonderful life, which, were its record complete, would fill, John says, more books than the world would contain. **Narrative form.**

As the first four narratives in the Old Testament may be called the four pillars of world-history, so the first four narratives in the New Testament may be called the four pillars of gospel history. The former were oral traditions, passed from mouth to mouth for hundreds, probably thousands of years before they were put into written form. The latter are the personal recollections of their authors, recorded within their own lifetime. The former were stories of successive events, ages apart. The latter are records of the

acts, words and experiences of one person, chiefly within the space of three years. The former are complete in themselves, and independent of each other, except in their common relation to a general plan and movement of history. The latter are parts of the same whole, sometimes duplicating, sometimes supplementing each other, and all bearing upon one great theme, one great series of facts, and one great purpose.

Matthew, called also Levi, was a revenue collector under the Roman government. The hatefulness of that government to the Jews, the oppressiveness of its revenue system, and the notorious greed and corruption of its officials of every grade, made the very name publican a synonym for all that was detestable, and a Hebrew publican little less than an apostate and a traitor.

Matthew.

It was from this class that Jesus selected Levi, the son of Alphæus, to be not only a companion and disciple, but an apostle, and one of the four biographers who were to tell the gospel story to the world. The Jewish magnates sneered at him and at Jesus for having anything to do with him. But he was the truest Jew of them all, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, deeply imbued with both the national and the religious

spirit of his race. According to a not improbable tradition, his gospel was first written in Hebrew, and afterward in Greek. At any rate, it is especially fitted to appeal to the Hebrew mind. He traces the genealogy of Jesus back to the great men of the patriarchal and royal line; and presents him as the Messiah whose coming the Scriptures foretold, and for whom every devout Israelite is looking. He quotes those discourses of our Lord, and reports those acts and scenes which are best fitted to impress a Jew; and he expresses Christian truth in terms of Hebrew thought.

Mark.

Mark's Gospel might properly be called The Gospel according to Peter. For there is the clearest evidence, scriptural and non-scriptural, that its author, who was not himself an apostle, was intimately associated with Peter, both in Jerusalem and in his evangelistic and missionary labors; and the direct agency of the apostle in the production of the narrative is supported by testimony reaching back to the century in which they lived, as well as by the style and contents of the gospel itself.

Mark was not a full-blooded Hebrew, but

the son of a Roman father and a Jewish mother. He knew the Romans and how to reach them, and his gospel was as perfectly adapted to appeal to the Roman mind as Matthew's was to appeal to the Hebrews.

His gospel is the briefest of the four, yet it relates more facts than any other, including with few exceptions every important item given by Matthew or Luke, and several that are given by no other evangelist. Perhaps the most striking feature of his gospel is the evident influence in it of an intense, impulsive nature, conceiving everything vividly, and depicting it graphically, not only relating what men did, but expressing what they felt, and putting the reader into sympathy with their emotions. All this favors the belief that it is as really Peter's gospel as Mark's. If it be so, it is a most remarkable piece of collaborative authorship.

Luke, like Mark, was not himself an apostle, but was the friend and intimate companion of a great apostle, being associated with Paul during a large part of his missionary career, and being, no doubt, as powerfully influenced by that remarkable mind and character as Mark had been by Peter.

Luke was a physician, and added to a professional education a high degree of general culture, including a thorough knowledge of the Greek language, and the tact, discrimination and aptitude of expression which enabled him to address himself effectively to men of his own class. As Matthew's gospel was especially fitted to influence the typical Jew, and Mark's to influence the typical Roman, so Luke's was fitted to influence the typical Greek and that class of Romans imbued with the Greek philosophy and spirit. He presents Christianity, in precisely those aspects and adaptations which appeal most powerfully to this type of mind. The Greek was a man of ideals; ideals in art, ideals in literature, ideals in statesmanship, social ideals, ideals of eloquence, physical beauty, strength, courage, patriotism, generosity, heroism. But his ideals had failed him. His golden age was past. His artists, his poets, his orators, his sages, his statesmen, his heroes were dead, and there were none to take their places. His civil and military supremacy was lost. His temples and statues were but beautiful monuments of departed glory. As to his gods, and the realms celestial and infernal, which they

Luke.

were fabled to inhabit, he laughed at them. He was cynical and pessimistic, and saw nothing better in life than indulgence in social and sensuous pleasures.

To such a man Luke brings this fresh, sweet, stimulating conception of human life. Here is the perfection of manhood which he seeks. Here is one who traces his lineage back through a line of great heroes, to God himself. Here is wisdom greater than that of Socrates, eloquence grander than that of Demosthenes. Here is surpassing virtue and nobility, godlike serenity and beauty of life. Here is one who has the marks of true divinity, who lives in contact and alliance with a supernatural world of actual realities, with angels, with glorified spirits, with God. He has the remedy for all human ills. He is equal to every emergency of life. He is superior to the powers of evil, the conqueror of death and the giver of immortality. He is the friend of sinners. He is patient with erring men and women. He loves and pities the most degraded. He can lift manhood and womanhood even from the pit of moral corruption into which Greek vices and Greek degeneracy have degraded them. Thus Luke and Paul

coöperated not only in the work of evangelism, but in the presentation of Christianity to the world. The great truths which Paul preached took on new reality and power in the story of that living Christ whom Luke portrayed, and whose wondrous words and deeds he recited. Luke and Paul.

It is Luke who relates those prenatal scenes which throw such a glow of simple human feeling over that part of the gospel history—the story of the virgin and the angel, the story of the angel and Zacharias, the story of the meeting of the inspired mothers, the story of the nativity. It is he who records for us the four hymns of spontaneous praise—the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Gloria in Excelsis and the Nunc Dimittis *—the first songs of the Christian church, still chanted with undiminished fervor by millions of believers. It is to him also that we are indebted for many of the most instructive of the parables, like those of the Pharisee and the publican, the good Samaritan, the importunate widow, the prodigal son, and for some of the most interesting incidents, like the visit to Zacchæus, the interview with the sinful woman, the raising of the widow's son.

* Luke 1:46–55, 68–79. Luke 2:14, 29–32.

It is he who has given us the fullest account of the closing days of our Lord's life upon earth. And it is he who quotes that wonderful "*promise of the Father*" whose fulfilment, as he himself afterwards records it, was the creation of the Christian church.

The Gospel of John presents another aspect of the life of our Lord. It especially emphasizes his divinity, his redemptive work, and the spirituality of his kingdom.

John. John was eminently qualified for the task. He was a Jew, a Galilean, a kinsman of Jesus, a man of singularly beautiful character, pure, gentle, devout, spiritual, and peculiarly fitted to understand such a character as Jesus. He was among the earliest to be called by our Lord, one of the three who attended him on specially important occasions, as at the transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the one who sat nearest, and leaned closest to the Master's heart, at the paschal feast.

John leaves us in no doubt as to the purpose of his gospel. "But these (things) are written," he says, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of

God; and that believing ye may have life in his name."

That is explicit. The Gospel of John, then, is an appeal to the reason and the faith of men, concerning the central truth of Christianity.

The book begins with a wonderful prologue upon Christ as the divine Creator, and as God incarnate, a passage whose sublimity of conception and of expression resembles that of the first chapter of Genesis. Then follows the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Christ, the Lamb of God; the night-talk with Nicodemus about the new birth; the gospel compressed into twenty-five words—John 3:16; the wayside colloquy with the woman at the well; the feeding of the five thousand—Jesus the bread of life; the water-pouring ceremony in the temple court—Jesus the water of life; the healing of the man born blind—Jesus the light of the world; Jesus the Good Shepherd; Jesus the resurrection and the life; Jesus the great Servant, the great Sacrifice, the great Comforter, the great Intercessor, the great Promiser, the great Redeemer; Jesus betrayed, arrested, denied, forsaken, falsely accused, unjustly convicted, condemned for his virtues, cruci-

fied for his love of mankind, dead, enshrouded and entombed, rising again in more glorious power, renewing his fellowship with his disciples, and preparing them to be his witnesses and successors in the work of world-evangelism.

Why four Gospels.

The four Gospels, taken together, are a wonderful presentation, from four different points of view, and under the guaranty of four independent witnesses, of the divinest life that ever was lived on the earth. Not all of them together give us a complete biography of Christ. But they give us those parts of it which he thought it essential for us to know, and through which we are enabled to know him and the body of momentous truths which he taught and exemplified.

Probably not one of the evangelists ever heard of such a thing as the laws of testimony; yet they have unconsciously conformed to those laws. They are the kind of men that would tell the truth if they knew it; they had every opportunity to know it; they were not credulous men, but slow to believe, even upon direct evidence; they had no motive for testifying falsely, but, on the contrary, suffered ridicule, persecution, imprisonment and death

for their testimony; their statements are inherently credible; and they show precisely those variations in non-essential details, and precisely that concurrence in essential facts, which are the accepted signs of honesty, accuracy and veracity.

CHAPTER XIX.

GOD WITH US.

As the crowning attraction of the Hebrew Scriptures was their portrayal of the coming glory of the Messianic kingdom, so the greatest and most compelling attraction of the new dispensation is the Messiah himself, around whom all Christian truth centers, and by the transcendent glory of whose being it is irradiated.

Christianity is something more than an improved Judaism. The splendid body of truth which it inherited from the older system was sufficient for its time, and it had grand meanings and values for all time. But it was not a finished revelation. It was to be extended, expanded, supplemented with truths far beyond the contents or the comprehension of the Hebrew mind.

New idea of God.

A New Conception of God came in with Christianity. The unity of God was the

central doctrine of Judaism. The triunity of God, though compatible with certain expressions in the Jewish Scriptures, was no part of the common Jewish conception of Jehovah. The time to unfold it, and to construct a theological system around it, had not come. The doctrine of the Trinity could not be grasped as an abstract proposition. Only by the incarnation could it be brought within the range of human thought; and the incarnation could not be understood in advance of its actual manifestation.

Certainly the Jews of Christ's time had no conception of such a paradox as a God-man, still less of a God who to his glorious unity added the sublimer and more ineffable glory of triunity. The idea was unspeakably shocking to their minds; and though, under their privilege as the people of Jehovah, they could say, "We have one Father, even God," for any one man to call himself the Son of God, in the sense in which Jesus used the expression, was to them the most daring blasphemy.

Yet it was this very heresy which was to become the most glorious truth of Christian revelation. What the unity of God had been to Jewish faith, the triunity of

God was to be to the faith of Christendom. The paradox, the impossibility, of a God-man was to become, did become, the most momentous fact in human history.

A divine nature.

His divine nature was real and complete, in every essential perfection. It was no make-believe divinity that "became flesh, and dwelt among us." It was the divine "Word," that is the utterance, the expression, the revelation, the reality of Deity. Eternity was his; he was "in the beginning." Divine fellowship was his; he "was with God." A divine nature was his; he "was God." Creative power was his; "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." Divine sonship was his; he was "the only begotten of the Father;" "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance," to whom the Father said, "Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee." Divine homage was paid to him: for when the Father "bringeth in the first-born into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

Mystery of it.

Here, then, within this inscrutable mystery of divine being, we have something more mysterious, more inscrutable, than

simple unity. We have a divine sonship and a divine fatherhood, of such a nature that they may address and be addressed by each other, send and be sent, love and be beloved.

The God-man.

On the other hand, the Son of God is, in an equally real and complete sense, *the Son of man.* "Since, then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." Like them in the substance, the nature and the attributes of the human body; like them in the helplessness and dependence of infancy; like them cradled in the arms and brooded by the love of a tender mother; like them subject to a loving human authority; like them advancing by natural and usual processes in stature and in wisdom; like them in toil and weariness, in hunger and thirst and pain; like them in laughter and in tears; in the joy of friendship, in the fierce ordeals of temptation, in wrong and persecution and death, in everything but sin. We cannot wonder, therefore, that the seemingly commonplace incidents which attended the beginning of this wonderful life, and which attracted

so little attention among men, excited such intense interest in the celestial world.

The King of Glory.

We are prone to make too much of *the lowliness of our Lord's infancy,* and too little of its stateliness and majesty. Life lifted up its gates of splendor, and adoring hosts sang peans of welcome, as the King of Glory entered into his new domain. It was a little thing to bid celestial beings to worship him. It seems as if every angel in heaven was eager for the chance to do some splendid thing in his honor. They ushered in the royal pageant with glory, beauty and song. There was a message, to bear to the devout Zacharias in the temple and an angel flew to carry it. There was a heavenly secret to tell to the maiden "highly favored," chosen from all the daughters of earth for the sacrament of holy motherhood, and God's messenger Gabriel went upon the errand, a service of celestial diplomacy above that of any earthly embassy. There was a word of re-

The Nativity.

assurance and promise to be spoken to the anxious-minded Joseph, and an angel wove it into the fabric of the good man's dreams. There were shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks by night, when a glorious

angel came by, so full of the great news from Bethlehem that he must needs stop and tell them about the new-born child with the wonderful titles and destiny, and where and how they might find him. And while he talked, and the light of the heavenly cloud enveloped the startled men and the sleeping sheep, and lit up rock and shrub and pasture slope, other angels came crowding around, and others, and others still, host upon host, choir upon choir, as if all heaven had come to the birthday fête, filling the air and the sky with radiant faces and gleaming wings and the rapturous, many-voiced music of heavenly song.

What mattered it, then, where such a child should be born? No stable or hovel could possibly degrade him, or detract from the transcendent glory of his being. No royal palace could enhance his dignity, or furnish him a fitting couch. The most sumptuous chamber would be squalid; the most magnificent vesture would be tawdry, in comparison with the splendors of his heavenly estate.

Of the actual conditions surrounding the nativity we possess very little definite knowledge. We are chiefly indebted for

our conceptions of the scene to poetry, art, and our occidental ideas of inns and stables. Out of the single word "manger" we have constructed a scene of offensive inconvenience by no means necessitated by the Scripture phraseology. "The beasts of the stall," if any were intrusively near, were probably the traveler's beasts of burden, always on terms of friendly familiarity with their owners, and including, perchance, those on which Joseph and Mary had journeyed thither.

But, be that as it may, the time, the place and the conditions, were of God's choosing, and were all parts of the same divine plan which included the incarnation itself and the whole scheme of redemption. He who chose humanity through which to reveal himself, and innocent childhood through which to enter humanity, and Mary of Nazareth in whose arms to place the infant Messiah, also chose Bethlehem, and the crowded inn, and the rude manger. Here, therefore, was the most suitable place in all the world in which the nativity could have occurred.

Mother and Child.

As the scene was glorified by the presence of a divine child, so was it beautified by the presence of a virgin mother. We

have no description of either of them, much less a pictorial representation. But to the loving devotion of Christian hearts they were both beautiful. The belief is not groundless. They were descendants of a line of lovely women and noble men. David, their great ancestor, is described as "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance," and a reasonable tradition has given Mary and Jesus the same characteristics—the blue eyes, the warm complexion, the auburn hair. Yet there is a surer and sweeter tradition still, that of Christian art, which has made them its ideals of human purity and beauty, and enshrined them in its holy of holies, the two most beautiful beings in the world, a beautiful mother and a beautiful child. Each artist has his own conception of the physical constituents of the picture, and his own interpretation of its spiritual meanings and message; but each gives it the supreme place, and lavishes all his skill upon the still imperfect effort at its reproduction.

Ideals of child.

It was this same fair picture of madonna and child, not in imaginative portraiture, but in living reality, that the wise men of the East saw, when they came from their far-off country, following the

wondrous star, and shocking Roman ruler and Jewish Sanhedrin with the startling question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

They found him. He was still in Bethlehem, not now in an inn or a manger, but in some proper home. "And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him."

It was the same mother and son that came to the temple feast, ten or eleven years later, when the first recorded act of Jesus was performed and his first recorded words were spoken. It is but a brief glimpse or two that we get of him, now in wise discourse with the wondering rabbis, now astonishing his mother with those strange sayings too deep for her to understand, but sacredly kept and pondered in her heart.

Boyhood of Jesus.

The next glimpse of him is eighteen years later. His cousin John has begun his ministry, preparing the way of the Lord, preaching the gospel of repentance, baptizing in water, and foretelling the coming of him who is to "baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." Among the throngs that flock to him, Jesus presents

himself, overrules John's protest, and receives baptism, not because he needs either actual or symbolical cleansing, but because he is God with us, because "it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren," and "to fulfil all righteousness," even the righteousness of a significant ceremonial which, with the sanction of his own example upon it, he is by and by to exalt into one of the great sacraments of his church. As he comes from the water, by which he has signified his identity with man, a twofold token of his identity with God is vouchsafed to him, the descending Spirit and the Father's voice of recognition and approbation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Temptation.

Next we see him *in the wilderness,* made like unto his brethren in the ordeal of a forty-days temptation; challenged by the tempter to bring his divine nature to the rescue of the human; offered the ease and splendor of earthly power, and subjected to we know not what other forms of spiritual assault, and resisting and repelling temptation, as we can, with the sword of the Spirit, with the steadfastness of a holy purpose, and the indignant scorn of a pure and incorruptible soul.

Ministry.

Now he begins his own ministry, preaching, healing and winning men. The prophetic name grows more and more significant. He is indeed God with us. His human nature is sweet, sympathetic, appealing, compelling; yet manly and strong. There is a magnetic power in his presence, in his voice, in his eyes. He calls men, and they come. Fishermen leave their nets, and publicans their revenues and their sins. Pure-minded women are drawn to him, and the sinful find pity and forgiveness in his eyes. Little children run to him, climb upon his knees and nestle in his arms. Like other men, he has his special friends, his favorite families, his circle of intimates and confidants. He lives a natural, wholesome life. He joins in wedding festivities. He weeps at the grave of a friend.

As man.

He is a happy man. The saying that Jesus "wept twice but never laughed," is half truth and half unwarranted and incredible assertion. He wept twice, probably many times. Probably also he often smiled and laughed, so often, and so much as a matter of course, that the evangelists never thought of mentioning it. He was "a man of sorrows." He was also a man

of deep and abiding joy. As the Creator, he made man a laughing animal, the only one in the world. As the Son of man, he was made like unto his brethren. He did not take on a defective humanity, but all that innocently belongs to us. He commends joy to his followers, and deprecates depression and gloom. He bids them "rejoice," "be of good comfort," "be of good cheer." No man ever had so many or so satisfying occasions for joy—joy in a wholesome physical nature, joy in high thought and a holy heart, joy in a conscience void of offense, joy in his work, joy in the sense of usefulness, joy in his human friendships and in his fellowship with his Father, joy in the anticipation of the home-coming that awaited him above, joy in the infinite blessings he was securing to the world. It is this joy, and much beside, which was "set before him," and for the sake of which he "endured the cross, despising shame." It is this Man of joy, this smiling face, this radiant, glad and gladdening life, that sheds brightness and good cheer wherever it goes, and makes luminous even the pathway of sorrow and the valley of the shadow of death.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GREAT TEACHER.

THREE forms of activity are repeatedly mentioned as embracing our Lord's earthly ministry—teaching, preaching and healing. Each of them constitutes a distinctly attractive feature of his life. Teaching is put first in the enumeration, and it occupied by far the largest place in his life. Indeed we may say that it occupied all of his life. Public discourse was but a more formal method of teaching, and healing was teaching through object-lessons of mercy and power.

The evangelists have not attempted to arrange the discourses of Jesus in the order in which they were delivered, and they are not given in the same order by the different writers. We may assume, therefore, that the important thing is not the time but the substance of the discourse.

Teaching.

The Sermon on the Mount, though not the earliest, is the most notable of them all,

and the one which most clearly and fully reveals the character of our Lord, the spirit of his gospel and the ideals of faith and righteousness that he set up.

Its theme may be said to be *The Blessed Life*. Blessedness is the superlative type of happiness, both in kind and in degree. In the literature of the language in which Jesus spoke, the gods were called "the blessed gods." Blessedness, in this sense, is such happiness as is enjoyed by a divine being, in distinction from that of a mere mortal. In the literature which Jesus created, departed saints are called the blessed dead. Blessedness in this sense is the happiness enjoyed by saints in heaven, as distinguished from that of earthly pleasures. In the beatitudes with which our Lord begins his great sermon, he states the conditions upon which this divine and celestial joy may be possessed by men. Blessedness.

The conditions are as surprising as the blessing offered is wonderful, and are far from those upon which men have been accustomed to expect happiness. The blessedness offered here is that of humility, of comforted sorrow, of meekness of spirit, of holy aspiration, of tender mercy, of purity

of heart, of peacemaking, of that fidelity to the truth which gladly suffers for its sake.

Yet the emphasis in every beatitude is not on its hard conditions but on its sweet promise. The emphatic word in every case is the word "blessed." As if our Lord, who was himself supremely and constantly happy, would teach us that a good Christian will be a happy one, and that he will be happy because he is a good Christian. It is his privilege, no matter what wrong or evil he may suffer, to "rejoice and be exceeding glad." The beatitudes as given by Luke put this point even more explicitly than those of Matthew. "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." "Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy." Surely there is blessedness in this very note of gladness which Jesus makes the key-note of his gospel.

Truths taught.

Two great functions are assigned by our Lord to his disciples, purification and illumination. "Ye are the salt of the earth," the preserving, sweetening, saving element in human society. "Ye are the light of the world," the source of moral and spiritual illumination, a center of brightness and irradiation wherever you go. Note

the mood and tense of the statement; not ye ought to be the salt of the earth, but ye *are* the salt of the earth; not aim to be the light of the world, but ye *are* the light of the world.

The blessed life.

The rest of the sermon is an unfolding and application of these same conceptions of the blessed life. He who lives that life, it seems, will "do and teach" the commandments of God. He will have a righteousness that is inward and spiritual, not superficial and pharisaic. He will keep blood-guiltiness not only from his hands but from his heart. He will be pure, not only in act but in thought. He will be so reverent as not only to break no oath but to make none. He will preserve his self-control under sorest provocation. He will love the unlovely, the hateful and the malicious. He will be benevolent without ostentation, and devout, worshipful and self-disciplinary without pretense. He will prize heavenly treasure above the earthly. He will cherish simplicity of purpose, and serve his divine Master only. He will not be distracted with anxiety about the morrow, or allow material things to obscure the spiritual. He will give his first thought and his most earnest effort

to the things of the kingdom of heaven. He will be charitable, putting the best construction and not the worst upon the conduct of his fellow men. He will not debase holy things to unholy uses. He will be a man of prayer, and a man of faith. He will keep the golden rule. He will choose and follow the right path, though it be never so narrow. He will be on his guard against the wiles of deceivers. He will prove the quality of his spiritual life by its fruits. He will hear the words of his Master and do them, and thus will build an imperishable moral structure on the immutable rock.

Power of teacher.

No wonder that the people who listened to such a discourse "were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes."

The same great and authoritative truths are presented by our Lord in various lights, and from various points of view, in other public discourses; in the expository sermon at Nazareth, in the denunciatory sermon upon hypocrites, in the sermon upon the beauty of the child-spirit, delivered with a baby in his arms as a text, in the discourses on the water of life, the bread of life, the light of the world, etc. "Never

man spake like this man," so cogently, with such clear conceptions of truth, with such infinite longing to convince men of it, with such sympathetic appreciation of their needs, with such sweet persuasiveness and power.

But it is his *shorter discourses,* after all, that are the most interesting and effective. The Sermon on the Mount seems to have been begun as a familiar talk to his disciples on a Galilean hillside, and gradually enlarged in scope and comprehensiveness as the general multitude gathered. Much of the instruction which has been preserved for us in the gospels was given to that little circle of chosen friends. Of this type of discourse the wonderful table-talk of the last supper, recorded in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, is the most notable example.

Then there are the *casual encounters* with people whose questions and needs call forth some of the most precious sayings of our Lord. There are, for instance, the talks with Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael, in their first visit of curiosity and instruction, the night-interview with Nicodemus, the wayside conversation with

the woman at the well of Samaria, the disappointing meeting with the young ruler who lacks one thing, the feasts at Matthew's house, at the house of Zacchæus of Jericho, at the loved home in Bethany, and upon many other occasions, seemingly trivial, but where words are spoken that have made the hearts of millions to burn within them.

The questions of Jesus, by which he sets men to thinking upon the great problems of life; the answers of Jesus to the questions by which his enemies seek to entrap him; the aphorisms of Jesus, which condense volumes of practical wisdom into a sentence; the quotations of Jesus from the Old Testament Scriptures, with which he meets many a difficulty, and silences many a cavil—all these enter into his teachings, and have become a treasury of unfailing wisdom to the world.

Parables.

The parables of Jesus form a unique and marvelously effective means of instruction. The most fascinating of all literary forms is the story. The most impressive of all modes of thought is the analogy. The most interesting of all figures of speech is the simile, with its related forms, the metaphor and the allegory.

The parable combines all these elements of interest. It is a narrative, it is based upon a simile, and it reasons by analogy. Our Lord was a consummate master of the parable. Looking upon nature and human life with the eye of a keen and sympathetic observer, he saw not only "natural law in the spiritual world," but spiritual law, and innumerable spiritual analogies, suggestions and lessons of wisdom in the natural world, the industrial world, the commercial world, the social world; and he brought them into service as a means of conveying and enforcing the great truths he was impressing upon the minds of men. The raising of wheat, the destruction of tares, the weed grown to a tree, the woman at her bread-making, the pearl-merchant at his bargains, the fisherman at his nets, the housewife with her lost shilling, the shepherd with his wandering sheep, the father with his wayward boy, all came at the call of the great Teacher, bringing each its tribute of homely wisdom. Thus the whole world became luminous with spiritual meaning, and the great truths of God translated themselves into terms of every-day speech and life.

Miracles.

The miracles of Jesus were another and effective mode of teaching. They were not only associated with the truths he spoke, authenticating his message, as the utterance of a divine teacher; they were a part of the teaching itself. Each miracle was a special revelation. Not one of them was a mere act of power. Not one of them was vindictive, or retaliatory. They were always the expression of divine compassion and mercy. They were always performed for the relief of suffering or disability. Thus they become a wonderful revelation of the character of God, and of the spirit of Jesus. Not by volumes or libraries, or the preaching of hundreds of prophets, could so impressive a revelation have been made. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Jesus. And he that saw Jesus, and witnessed his daily acts of mercy, his pity for every form of suffering, his quickness to respond to every cry of distress, knew his heart, and by it the Father's heart, as he could know it in no other way.

But that is not all. The miracles are revelations, not only of the divine character, but of divine truth. Each miracle is an acted parable; and no verbal parables

conveyed more important truths, or expressed them more plainly. Sometimes our Lord made the application himself, as in the discourse on sight and insight, in connection with the healing of the man born blind, and the little talk with the disciples about the mountain-moving faith, in connection with the cure of the demoniac child. But usually there was no need of such exposition. The incident revealed its own meaning and carried its own lesson. What a wealth of instruction is there, for instance, in the healing of blind Bartimæus; the seizing of a passing opportunity, the pathetic appeal to the ever-responsive heart, the interference of officious people, the persistency of the suppliant, the quick response of Jesus, and the gracious word and blessing. So also with the healing of the Syrophenician maiden, of the ten lepers, of the centurion's servant, of the man with the withered hand, of the paralytic let down through the roof, and all the rest in the list of healing wonders. Which of them has not been made the theme of thousands of sermons, and a source of illumination to some truth of the gospel?

Character of teacher.

But the larger part of a teacher's power is not in what he says or in what he does, but in what he is. Education is a personal effect. Its product is personal, and its source is personal. Not the text-book, not the lecture, not the laboratory, but the man behind them, is the real educating force. The career of every great teacher, ancient or modern, exemplifies this fact; and in the greatest of all teachers it finds its greatest example. It was the beauty and the grandeur of that incomparable personality that gave eloquence to his speech and significance to his deeds, and made it a liberal education to be with him.

Finally, he taught through the instrumentality of those who had been first taught by him. This is the climax of teaching power, to imbue others with the teacher's spirit, make them masters of the truth to be imparted, fill them with his enthusiasm, and send them forth to manifold his message and multiply his power. It is a splendid evidence of that power that it can be thus delegated, that new personalities, by thousands and by millions, can be inspired by it. And it is the unique distinction of Christian truth, as presented in the Christian Scriptures, and

through them to the world by the voice of the living teacher, that the personality of its divine Author pervades and energizes it. He is its great attractive force. He it is who, being lifted up, is drawing men unto himself.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MAKING OF THE CHURCH.

The Christian church is one of the wonderful works of God, the product of an inventive wisdom and a constructive skill as divine, and as deserving of our study and admiration, as that displayed in the making of worlds.

In many respects its formation was like that of the Hebrew church, the story of whose beginning and progress constitutes so large and so interesting a feature of Old Testament history. There is a similar selection of material, its preservation amid peril and hostile opposition, its growth, the shaping of its life, the development of its power, the fixing of its place in the economy of the world, and its relation to the kingdom of God.

The Christian church is, as we have seen, the heir and successor of the Hebrew church, inheriting its great truths, its con-

ceptions of God, its moral ideals, its standards of individual, social and national obligation.

Superior to Hebrew church.

But it was vastly superior to its predecessor. It was planned on a larger scale, more comprehensive, more complex, and immeasurably more potent and efficient. The Hebrew church was commensurate with the Hebrew nation. The nation was the church, and the church was the nation. A man became a member of the church by virtue of his lineage, and remained so during life, without regard to fitness or personal character. Membership in the Christian church, is based on spiritual qualifications. Its members enter it from choice, having first chosen its Lord as their Saviour and Master, and given credible evidence of their fitness to bear his name. They enter into covenant with him and one another, taking upon themselves the most solemn vows and obligations. They are required to maintain a certain standard of character and life, and may be rebuked, suspended or excluded for acts or omissions inconsistent with their vows.

Under the Hebrew system, the recognized and responsible members of the

church were men. Men only received the initiatory rite of religion, and were required to perform all public religious duties. Sometimes, indeed, a splendid woman arose, like Miriam or Deborah, and through extraordinary ability and force of character, or under special divine inspiration, broke away from conventional restraints, and became a prophetess or a leader. But such a woman was, at best, a brilliant exception. The rank and file of her sex, while doubtless excelling in spirituality, and in the passive graces of piety, were not an active force in the religious life of the people.

Woman in Christian church.

In the Christian church, on the contrary, this limitation of spiritual functions and forces was swept away, and woman was called to her exalted place in the economy of the kingdom of heaven. It was she to whom the glorious angel brought the first promise of redemption. It was she in whose arms the holy Child was laid, and to whose love and care he was committed. It was she whose gracious ministries were the solace of his weariest hours. It was she whose devotion nerved her to look unshrinkingly upon the ghastly scenes of Golgotha, and to go, in the dark, to the

awesome place of the dead. It was she to whom the risen Lord first revealed himself, and by whom he sent the resurrection news to the more dilatory and distrustful men of the company. Women are specially mentioned among those who met in that upper prayer-room in Jerusalem, and upon whom the pentecostal blessing came, according to the "promise of the Father," and the foregone promise of the prophet.* In the larger freedom and impartiality of the new dispensation, there was grace, privilege and responsibility for every member, male and female, old and young.

Breadth of spirit.

A similar difference of spirit is seen in the attitude of the church toward mankind. Judaism was exclusive; Christianity is inclusive. Judaism was for a single race; Christianity is for all races. The Jew was bidden to teach his religion to his children; the Christian is bidden to teach all the children of men. The Jewish church was for a temporary purpose, and came to an end by virtue of its own self-limitations. The Christian church is for all time. Its work is to go on, its power is

* Acts 2:16–18.

to endure, its triumphs are to increase, till the end of the world.

Structure of church.

Three Elements in the New Testament conception of the church mark it as a divine creation, and make it marvelous and beautiful in our eyes—the headship of Jesus Christ, the active presence and agency of the Holy Spirit, and the authority and efficiency of the Word of God.

The Headship of Christ is its fundamental principle. Our Lord did not organize a church. It was one of the things whose hour had not yet come. Only twice, so far as his recorded sayings show, did he so much as speak the word church; and then he did not explain what he meant by it. But in a single brief sentence he set it in a light that irradiated it with the splendor of his being. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." It is a thing to be built, constructed, created; it is to be his; he is to be its builder; and it is to be as indestructible as his power.

The second divine element in the church is the presence and agency of *the Holy Spirit.* This was "the promise of the Father." It was for this that the disciples were bidden to "wait." It was through

this divine enduement that they were to "receive power." And it was only when this gift, this power, came upon them, enduing them with an eloquence and an unction not their own, and laying mighty hold upon the minds and consciences of men, that the church is spoken of as an accomplished fact.*

The third divine potency in the church is *the Word of God.* This is the message of the church to the world, the source of every truth it holds, the basis of every appeal it makes to men, the authoritative rule of faith and of life to every believer. It was the word of God, spoken by Simon Peter, as the inspiration, and under the inspiration, of the Holy Spirit, and in testimony to the divinity and Messiahship of Jesus, that wrought such conviction in the minds of the great pentecostal throng.

Thus these three powers, the divine Christ, the divine Spirit and the divine Word, involve one another, and support and intensify one another, and together make the church the unique and invincible thing it is.

At first sight, Jesus seems to have given little attention to the development of this

* Acts 5:11.

Jesus and the church.

great agency through which he was to be made known to the world, and in which and by which the forces of his kingdom were to be organized and operated. With no definite instructions, but without the slightest misgiving, he leaves the introduction and propagation of the new religion, and all the vast interests of his kingdom, in the hands of eleven inexperienced men, whose training had been fishing, tax-gathering and other commonplace occupations, and three years of association with him.

But he knows what he is doing. He is trusting everything, including the disciples themselves, not to their own discretion, but to the guidance of the Spirit whom he has promised them. Moreover, Jesus himself, though he is going away, is yet to remain. In some mystical but real and transcendent sense, he is still to be with them, perpetually with them, "even unto the end of the world."

And when the time for organization came, and the exigencies of associated Christian life arose, they found that their Lord had given them, though in an apparently indirect and incidental way, many hints and instructions of great practical value. He had instituted the Lord's

supper, and given directions for its perpetual observance. He had instituted the rite of baptism, and bidden them administer it to believers. He had taught them the great truths on which doctrines are based, and out of which creeds are made. He had assigned to them the duty of preserving the purity of the church, and had outlined the method of dealing with offenses and offenders. He had enjoined upon his followers the mutual love, the fellowship, the coöperation, and many other of those very things which it is the province of the church to embody and express; and he had committed to them such tasks, interests and undertakings as could be properly provided for only through the kind of organization which the church involves.

Apostles and church.

The apostolic church, like the church of our own day, was far from perfection. Its members were plain, every-day men and women, full of human frailty. There was jealousy, selfishness and fault-finding among them, and not a little to find fault with. There were shocking inconsistencies, and some graceless members—shams, shirks, hypocrites and liars. The church-visible presented many unlovely aspects.

But there was, partly within and partly without the church-visible, a church-invisible, whose boundaries the eye of God alone could trace, and whose constituent parts he alone could identify, "having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." *

This is the church which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself up, "that he might sanctify it, ... by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." †

It is to the church in this sense that those glowing descriptions and representations apply, that so bewilder us with the richness and variety of their imagery. Now it is a building of God. Now it is the temple of God. Now it is the flock of Christ. Now it is the household of faith. Now it is the holy brotherhood of which Jesus is the eldest-born. Now it is the bride of Christ, fair without and pure within. Now it is the very body of Christ, a living organism, palpitating with his life.

No one simile can represent the great

* 2 Tim. 2 : 19. † Eph. 5 : 26, 27.

conception. It is so unique in its structure, so divine in its vitalities and energies, that no single image is sufficient. Only by a multitude of images, supplementing, complementing, limiting, overlapping, even contradicting one another, can the transcendent idea be expressed. Like the old Syrian prophet, viewing the great Hebrew encampment, now by this mode of approach and now by that, now from this height of vision and now from that, we behold the hosts of the Lord, and exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"—(Num. 24: 5.)

CHAPTER XXII.

STORIES OF CHRISTIAN CONQUEST.

THE *Forward Movement* of the apostolic church embraced four fields of evangelistic activity, as named by our Lord in his commission to his disciples. They were Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.*

Church conquests.

Probably all of them were reached to some extent, directly or indirectly, as the result of the pentecostal revival. Converts among the various pilgrim bands "from every nation under heaven," doubtless carried the gospel message they had received back with them to their several home-lands. Damascus, for instance, was a sufficiently important Christian center to warrant a special attack from the Jewish persecutors under Saul, although the apostles had not then visited it in person. They took up the work in the order indi-

* Acts 4:8.

cated in their instructions, "beginning at Jerusalem." It was a glorious beginning. Its story was outlined in the previous chapter.

But it was a beginning only. After it followed the still more remarkable forward movement, which embraced the remaining fields of labor, and in which, as in our day, not only ordained ministers, but many other workers, lay and clerical, had an active part, bearing the great message to wider and wider spheres of influence.

Of the work in the second of the four fields mentioned, that of *Judea* outside of Jerusalem, we have little direct knowledge. No doubt the apostles and their co-laborers did faithful service there, and with their accustomed success.

In the third field, *Samaria,* the work begun by Philip the evangelist, and so cordially seconded by the apostles from Jerusalem, is graphically described in the eighth chapter of the Acts, and furnishes one of the most thrilling stories in the history of evangelism. Race prejudice is broken down. The old jealousy and animosity between Jew and Samaritan is forgotten. A common ground for them is found in the gospel of Christ. Multitudes

embrace the truth. The Holy Spirit, infallible sign of the genuineness of the work, is poured out upon the Samaritan believers, as upon those in Judea. There is great joy in that city. Simon the sorcerer, a notorious and influential magician of the city, becomes a believer, in his own mercenary and professional way, but has neither part nor lot in the spiritual blessing. Peter and John, amazed at what they behold, gain a new conception of the scope of redemption, and go forth to preach the gospel in other villages of the Samaritans.*

Philip the evangelist.

As to Philip, he is not allowed to stay with his new converts, but is sent down into the old Philistine country, to meet a certain traveler who needs instruction in Christian truth. So does God provide for every man's spiritual need, and so does he guide the helper and the one in need of help as to bring them together at precisely the right moment. Philip finds his man, joins him at the critical moment, expounds to him the Scripture he was reading, teaches him its Christian application, receives his confession of faith, baptizes him, and sends him "on his way rejoic-

* Acts 8: 4–24.

ing," to be a Christian missionary in far-off Ethiopia. Then Philip, having completed this errand, turns back, under a new impulse of the Spirit, and begins another series of meetings in the Judean cities.* Such is the way of a man under the influence of the Spirit, and such is the way of God with him.

And now the time has come when the fourth and the largest field of all is to be entered. The gospel is to be carried "unto *the uttermost part of the earth,*" and the Holy Spirit, under whose guidance all is being done, prepares the minds of his servants for the larger conception of their work, opens the way for its prosecution, and assembles the workers by whom it is to be accomplished.

Peter and Gentiles.

The educating process begins with Simon Peter. His mind has been partially liberalized by his experience in Samaria; but he has not yet grasped the stupendous idea of a gospel for the whole Gentile world. It comes to him by suggestion, through the dream-parable in Joppa, the vision of the sheet let down from heaven. It faces him as a practical problem when he is sent by divine com-

* Acts 8 : 40.

mand to Cornelius, the Roman centurion. It masters him, as a great and controlling conviction, when he sees Gentiles sharing with Jews the same spiritual experience, and receiving, as the seal of their salvation, the same baptism of the Holy Spirit. Full of this wonderful new thought, he hastens back to Jerusalem, tells the glorious news to his brethren, silences their objections, and arouses them to his own fervor of enthusiasm, as they see for the first time the vast scope of redemption, and take the great Gentile world to their hearts.*

Antioch.

More good news comes to them from Antioch, that splendid seat of Roman opulence and profligacy. The indifference of its half-million people to anything but their own base pleasures makes it a safe asylum for those who have been driven by persecution beyond the bounds of Jewish jurisdiction. Exiled, but not silenced, the Christian refugees have no sooner arrived in their new retreat than they take up again their appointed work of evangelization. Beginning among their Jewish brethren, the work soon extends to the Gentile popu-

* Acts 10 and 11.

lation, and results in another great revival, like that in Samaria.

Again the mother-church in Jerusalem sends a delegation of sympathetic inquiry and assistance; and again God opens the eyes of his people to the magnitude and the magnanimity of his plan of salvation for "every nation under heaven."

Saul or Paul.

Meantime, he has chosen the man whom he has determined to make the leader of the new evangelism. It is a strange choice, one *Saul of Tarsus,* a Jew, a Roman citizen, a Pharisee, an officer of the Sanhedrin, and the head persecutor of the Christian church. But God knows his heart, and sees in him the fittest man in the world for the work now to be done. One glorious vision of Christ, one convincing word out of the sky, changes the zealous Jew to a zealous Christian, the fierce persecutor to a devout believer, and calls from him that purposeful question, which thenceforth becomes the motto of his life, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Blinded by the divine glory, healed by divine power, endued with the divine Spirit, chastened by solitude and meditation, humbled by his past, splendidly

equipped for his future, he too comes to Antioch, the new center of Christian evangelism, whence, in due time, with his beloved friend and co-laborer, Barnabas, he sets forth on his great missionary career.

There is no need to tell again the story of those journeys which Luke, who was Paul's companion in most of them, has so graphically related in the book of the Acts. It is a wonderful story, of foot-journeys and sea-voyages, of storms and shipwrecks, of zeal and devotion and faith, of arduous toil for the Master, of opposition and persecution, of joy and blessing and success, of grace triumphant, of souls converted, of churches founded and cherished and edified. In Cyprus and Perga, in Iconium and Lystra, in the Pisidian Antioch, in Ephesus and Troas, in the cities of Macedonia, in Athens and Corinth and Rome, the great missionary pursues his work, while God works mightily through him, convincing and converting men, planting churches, building up believers in faith and holiness, and making the strongholds of paganism the centers of Christian life and influence.

His own words naïvely summarize the experiences of this career:

"Whereinsoever any is bold, ... I am bold also. . . . . in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. . . . . five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; . . . . in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." *

This is not complaint or self-pity, but exultation, that divine grace is sufficient and more than sufficient to turn all this evil to good, this loss to gain. Over against every trial he puts a blessing:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; . . . . perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." †

* 2 Cor. 11:21–28. † 2 Cor. 4:8–10, 16, 17.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME PRICELESS OLD LETTERS.

NEXT *to personal conversation,* the freest expression a man makes of himself is in his letters to his friends. And next to a personal acquaintance with the man himself, the best means of knowing him is through those letters. It is another of the unique features of the New Testament, that of its twenty-seven books twenty-one are letters. We may in fact say twenty-two, for the Book of Revelation, as we shall presently see, is really in epistolary form.

Charm of letters.

The advantages of this mode of religious instruction and inspiration are obvious. The letter admits of all the fundamental forms of discourse—description, narration, exposition and argumentation. It puts the teacher, if not into the best, at least into the second-best position for influencing his audience. His attitude is

that of familiar and sympathetic friendship. It enables him to adjust his communication to their special circumstances and needs. It reduces abstract truth to concrete fact, the general to the specific, the theoretical to the practical. It infuses into the message the warmth of personal affection, and gives it the vividness and the local color of actual realities.

The apostolic epistles, therefore, were, next to the living voice, the most effective instrumentality their authors could adopt for making themselves a vital and perpetual influence to those to whom they wrote.

They are also the most intelligible and impressive form in which to transmit apostolic thought and influence to succeeding generations of believers; and all the more so because the writers had apparently no such far-reaching effect in view. They do not write as if addressing us over the heads of their contemporaries. They speak directly to the men of their time, about existing conditions and interests, and so they reach those of all time. For the faculties of the human mind, the essential traits of human nature, the eternal needs of the human soul, the truths of the

gospel, the conditions of salvation and of spiritual growth, the ideals of Christian character, the phenomena of Christian experience,—all the most vital things with which a religious teacher has to deal, are the same now as then; and whatever is temporary or local in the original application of the message only serves to show us how flexible, how versatile, how adaptable is the gospel. No systematic treatise on theology could be so valuable to us as the presentation in these epistles of great isolated truths in their application to special needs. And no formal description or narrative could give us so vivid an impression of the time as do these homely every-day facts and allusions, as seen in the light of those truths. Thus the apostolic epistles furnish us both doctrine and history.

Apostolic letters.

Of the twenty-one so-called epistles, thirteen, not counting the Epistle to the Hebrews, were written by *Paul.* They occupy three-fifths of the space given in the New Testament to the epistolary writings.

They are the letters of a zealous and habitually busy man, written at various times, during the last fifteen or sixteen

years of his life, some of them on journeys, some amid the scenes of a strenuous ministry, some from jails, and dungeons, and the Roman prison-camps. They are a spontaneous expression of himself, and furnish us ample material for a conception of his character, intellectual and moral. They also give us a vivid picture of the times, of the awful degeneracy and depravity of the pagan world, and of the temptations, perils, and persecutions of the people of God, and of their current spiritual condition. They are the messages of a pastor and spiritual father to his spiritual children, rejoicing over their virtues, grieving at their faults, charitable toward their weaknesses, sternly rebuking their sins and their inconsistencies, pouring out affectionate warnings, counsels, instructions, exhortations and encouragements.

Paul is preëminently *the apostle of faith*—justification by faith, living by faith, walking by faith, salvation by faith. He is also the apostle of good works, having more to say about them than James; and the apostle of love, of which he has more to say than John.

Individual passages of notable beauty in

Paul's letters.

his writings are too numerous to be even referred to. Where in all literature is there anything comparable to the rhapsody upon Christian privilege in the eighth chapter of Romans? or the conception of Christian unity and coöperation in the twelfth chapter? or the glorification of love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians? or the great resurrection pean of the fifteenth chapter? or the splendid ideal of Christian attainment that fills the whole Epistle to the Ephesians?

The salutations and benedictions of Paul are a charming expression of his character. His letters are full of apt expressions; aphorisms, like "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" paradoxes, like "we look not at the things which are seen;" "When I am weak, then am I strong;" happy phrases, like "riches of grace," "fulness of Christ," "rooted and grounded in love."

Best of all, is the joyous, confident, *optimistic spirit* that pervades the writings of Paul, commending the religion he preaches to the common sense of men,

winning their hearts, and teaching them to trust and hope and "rejoice evermore."

Letter of James.

James is the apostle of practical righteousness. He does not undervalue faith, but he insists upon its practical expression. He does not teach salvation by good works; but he insists upon good works as the indispensable credentials of a saved man. He would have a man's religion control his tongue, nerve him to fight his temptations, turn his trials into blessings, keep him in trustful submission to the divine will, and make him mighty in prayer.

Peter's letters.

Peter is the same frank, unconventional, straightforward man as a letter-writer that he was in his daily life. He is as enthusiastic as Paul concerning the privileges of the Christian, his "living hope," his "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away," and the "joy unspeakable and full of glory," inspired by his faith in Christ. He is as practical as James in his demand for personal righteousness in the believer, whom he exhorts to cultivate faith, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, holiness.

John is the apostle of love, animated by

John's letters.

his own deep love for his Master, thrilled by the great joy of his Master's love for him, overflowing with love for his brethren, longing to see them animated and actuated by love for God and one another. Like his fellow apostles, he exalts the privileges of the children of God, on the one hand, and the splendid ideal of Christian character, on the other. John is the only one of the four evangelists who also appears in epistolary literature; and his letters are the expression in expository form of the same great truths which his gospel presents as facts and doctrines taught and illustrated in the life of our Lord. "Love is of God." "God is love." "We love, because he first loved us." "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

John is also the apostle of salvation by Christ.

"He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be . . . . if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."

Here is justification, holiness, privilege, fraternal fellowship, communion with God, eternal glory.

The Epistle of Jude, consisting of a single chapter, is by one who was not an apostle, and whose identity is uncertain. It is mainly a reproduction of the second chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter. Yet it has some original features of striking significance, such as its reference to facts and to sacred books outside of Old Testament sources. It presents a terrible indictment of the immorality of its time, and is appropriately denunciatory. All the more beautiful by contrast is the doxology with which the epistle closes, and which alone might account for its preservation in the affection and the literature of the church:— Jude.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the only anonymous letter in the collection; but it suffers no loss of interest or of authority through the uncertainty as to its authorship. It is a masterly discussion of revealed religion, under its two great developments, Judaism and Christianity, interpreting the former as typical and Letter to Hebrews.

preparatory, and the latter as the consummation of the divine plan for the salvation of men. The deity of Jesus Christ, his kingly glory, his exaltation above the greatest of men and the highest of saints or angels, his condescension and sympathy, his fitness through human experience to be man's friend and Saviour, the fulfilment in him of all divine promises and human hopes, the duty of men to accept him, the privileges of those who do so, their affiliation and fellowship with the saints of all ages, the inspiration that comes from this "great cloud of witnesses," watching our life—these are the main themes of the epistle. The double definition of faith, and the roll-call of faith's heroes and victors, in the eleventh chapter, make it one of the most notable passages in all Scripture. The epistle closes with a benediction which, for sweetness and beauty, might have dropped out of heaven:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

The Book of Revelation, assuming that the common view concerning its authorship is correct, may properly be called the Fourth Epistle of John. He was directed to write it, and to send it to a group of seven churches in western Asia Minor, each of which is separately addressed by name in its opening chapters. Wonderful revelation.

In form, it is a description of a series of visions, glorious but mysterious, in which Christ, in his divine and sacrificial character, is the central figure, and his kingdom, in its development, progress and consummation, is the absorbing spectacle.

No other book of the New Testament has proved so difficult of interpretation or has given rise to such widely divergent and irreconcilable views. It is not consistent with the plan of this work to discuss those views, or compatible with its limits even to state them.

There are, however, beauties and attractions in the book which lie quite outside the field of controversy, and properly within our own. We see the pathetic exile of the aged apostle, the loneliness of his island prison, the Sabbath stillness around him, the mood of spiritual meditation that had come upon him, the glorious vision of

Christ, the sevenfold symbol of light, and the stars in the Lord's right hand. We hear the wondrous voice that speaks to him, the words of gracious reassurance to the apostle, the messages of loving rebuke and of loving praise sent to the churches, the warnings and exhortations, the seven promises to "him that overcometh."

We see the open door of heaven and hear the voice that calls us up into scenes of glory. We behold our Lord, enthroned and worshipped, and hear him adored in the grand *Oratorio of the Creation*: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created."

The scene changes, and we behold him as the Lamb of God, and hear that chorus of a hundred million voices, and millions upon millions singing the *Oratorio of the Messiah*: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

This is the dominant note that sounds through the book, and that comes back to us again and again, clear and sweet,

through trumpet-blasts, and earthquakes, and the rush of marching armies, and the roar of babel voices. It proclaims the steady, unhalting progress of the kingdom of Christ. "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign."

And at last, out of all the confusion, the wars and the tumults and the crash of falling empires, there comes the peaceful day, the scene of triumph and joy, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, in the glory of gold and gems, and the beauty of holiness, the home of the saints, the City of God.

Holy City.

"And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb . . . . and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. . . . Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. . . . And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely."

Thus the long procession of the centuries, beginning with the earthly Paradise,

brings us at length to the celestial. The beautiful things that have charmed us culminate in the most beautiful and attractive of all; and the apocalyptic vision that reveals it to us culminates in a many-voiced, generous, heart-moving invitation to mankind to yield to its attractions and accept its offers of grace and exaltation and everlasting life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FIVE NOTABLE WORDS FROM THE VOCABULARY OF DUTY.

THE Law of Sinai, which outlines the requirements of religious duty as presented to the children of Israel, is called the Decalogue; that is, the Ten Words, or utterances, each of which specifies some sin to be avoided—irreverence, idolatry, profanity, Sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, theft, slander, covetousness. This decalogue of negatives was, as we have had occasion to notice, adopted by our Lord, and made a part of the moral code of Christianity, its two tables, one relating to the duty of man to God, and the other to the duty of man to man, being summarized in two comprehensive commandments, of similar import.

But besides this inherited decalogue of negatives, Christianity has a decalogue of its own, its own Ten Words, each of them

denoting a great spiritual idea, not negative but positive, which it will be worth our while to study. The Christian decalogue, like the Mosaic, divides itself into two parts, though the division is upon a different principle. Each part contains a group of five words, the first group signifying what God expects of men, the second what men may expect of God.

The first group comprises Repentance, Faith, Love, Righteousness, Service. It is the vocabulary of Christian duty.

Repentance.

Repentance stands first in the order of mention, as it does in the order of experience. Assuming that the definition of the word is sufficiently familiar, and the discussion of its theological aspects improper, we have simply to notice the great emphasis put upon it in the New Testament, and the emphasis it puts upon personal holiness. When John the Baptist, in his leathern girdle and his rough camel's-hair coat, began preaching in the Jordan valley, the first word of his first sermon was, "Repent." When Jesus came up out of the wilderness, and began his ministry on the seashore of Galilee, the first word of his first sermon was, "Repent." When he sent forth his disciples as lay evangelists,

"they went out, and preached that men should repent." When he gave them their final instructions, on the eve of his ascension, he told them that the purpose of his death and resurrection was "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."

Remembering that the Greek word used in these passages and in all others in which repentance is enjoined as a duty, means "Change your mind," that is, your purpose, your moral attitude toward God and men, we see how radical is the demand of Christ upon the man who would be his disciple. He must change his mind. His thinking is wrong. His heart is wrong. His will is wrong. He is facing in the wrong direction; he must turn about. He must form new purposes. He must adopt a new set of principles. He must begin a new life. And because he is commanded to do this, he has power to do it, and is under obligation to do it, and to do it now.

This initial requirement, meeting every man at the threshold of the kingdom of heaven, marks Christianity as a unique religion among the faiths of the world, a religion based upon the right moral and spiritual character of its adherents. It is

upon condition of such repentance as this that the remission of sin is promised to the penitent.

Faith. *Faith* comes next on our list; and though repentance has precedence in the order of mention, faith has the larger place in our Saviour's dealing with individual souls. Even in his acts of physical healing how often he suspended the exercise of his miraculous power, while he challenged the faith of the applicant. "Believest thou?" "According to thy faith be it unto thee."

But it is in the spiritual realm that he gives faith its great distinction. It is "he that believeth on him" and only he, that "hath everlasting life." It is the doubt of men, doubt of his power, doubt of his love, doubt of his sincerity, doubt of his promises, that grieves him and wounds him to his heart.

Faith is a natural right, even between man and man. Every man is entitled to be trusted by his fellow men until he is proved untrustworthy. We trust one another in business, in social relations, in friendship, and it is rational to do so. In civilized society most men are honest and

truthful most of the time. If it were not so, civilized society would be impossible.

What wonder, then, that God, who is truthful all the time, always sincere, always trustworthy, should demand faith as his right, and that without faith it should be "impossible to please him."

Yet he never asks a man to believe without evidence. That would be doing violence to the rational nature he has given him. Nor does he ever fail to furnish evidence sufficient to satisfy a candid mind, and precisely the kind of evidence that is adapted to the mind affected—logic for the learned rabbi, miracles for the obtuse multitude, nail-prints and spear-mark for the incredulous Thomas.

Moreover, he asks no more than he gives. Abraham believed God. Of course. Why should he not? The marvelous thing is not Abraham's faith in God, but God's faith in Abraham. And the marvelous thing in our Lord's relation to men is not their faith in him, but his faith in them—in Matthew the publican, in Simon the fisherman, even in Judas Iscariot, in the hundreds and thousands of others around him, and in the millions upon millions who never heard of him. If he had not had

more faith in us than we have in him, he would never have undertaken our redemption.

Love. *Love* is the third great word in the Christian vocabulary. Love is at once the divinest and the most nobly human of all our sentiments. To love and to be loved is the epitome of two gospels, the gospel of human life and the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. And in the teachings of our Lord these two gospels are blended into one. It is under this word that he summarizes the law, condensing the Ten Commandments into two, and reducing all human duty to terms of love. Both of them are quoted from the Old Testament, upon which he so freely drew for great universal truths; but it is he who has given them their infinite vitality and breadth of meaning, and made the love they enjoin the essence and the substance of holy living. This, too, is a unique distinction of Christianity. It is the religion of love. Not of mere sentiment. Love as a passion or an emotion is capricious and erratic. It is possible only within narrow limits. Its object must be near, visible, tangible. Its action is involuntary. We cannot will ourselves to feel an emotion of love for this or

that person upon demand. But love as a principle of action is voluntary and dependable. Such is the love of God for us, a great controlling purpose, making everything he does the expression of his beneficence, his unselfishness, his magnanimity. And as he loves us, we are to love him; and as we love ourselves, we are to love our fellow men. Thus this sweet and beautiful influence becomes the dominant force in the lives of godly men and in the kingdom of heaven.

Righteousness.

Righteousness is the fourth word in the vocabulary of Christian duty, and follows naturally from the other three. If repentance be sincere, the penitent will, as John exhorted his converts to do, "bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." If faith be genuine, the believer will, as James exhorts his brethren to do, show their faith by their works. If we love God, we shall strive to do what Jesus says he always does, the "things that please him." If we love our fellow men, we shall conform all our dealings with them to the law of love.

But our Lord does not leave us to arrive at these convictions by mere inference. He has made righteousness the subject of

explicit commands, and has given it a scope so broad as to embrace every obligation we owe to God or men. He distinguishes between apparent righteousness and real righteousness, between the righteousness of outward acts and the righteousness of the inward life.

Best of all, he has made himself an object-lesson in perfect righteousness. No guile was found in his mouth, and no blemish in his life. What he required men to do, that he did. What he would have every man to be, that he was. Thus the change of moral attitude and purpose, the abhorrence and renunciation of sin, the adoption of new motives, new ideals, new principles of action, demanded of the penitent, is to be permanent. He is not only to turn about, but to rise to a higher spiritual plane, where he must strive to reach the measure of that seemingly impossible standard, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Service.

Service is the fifth word in our list; and as the preceding four imply one another and are inseparable one from another, so this one is implied by them all, and involved in them all, in the fruits meet for repentance, in the good works that prove

our faith, in our love for God and men, in the righteousness that brings us into likeness to our Lord.

Here, again, he interprets and enforces by his own example the virtue he would inculcate upon his followers. "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister" (servant); "and whosoever would be first among you shall be . . . . servant" (bond-servant) of all. For "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (not to be served but to serve).

The Great Servant.

This is a revelation of great significance, as coming from a divine being. It gives us a little glimpse into the heart of God. God does not exist to be served but to serve. He is the greatest servant in the universe. Creation is a form of service. Providence is a form of service. Government is a form of service. He is love; and love is a passion to serve the one beloved. The mother is servant to the child, the lover to his betrothed, the friend to the friend. So God is servant to his children. He is served, and ought to be served, by every creature in earth and heaven. But his greater joy is to serve them.

And it was this spirit, this divine pas-

sion for serviceableness, that brought the Son of God from heaven, where glorious hosts delighted to serve him, and constrained him to become the Son of man, that he might perform a supreme service for us, and teach us the secret of noble living. He does not rebuke our ambition, but stimulates it. Do we desire to be great? That is what he desires for us. But greatness, according to his standard, is not in winning an exalted position, not in securing the adulation of admirers, not in making others serviceable to ourselves, but in making ourselves serviceable to them.

The measure of greatness.

It is a wonder that men needed to be taught that lesson. It is written on every page of history, and in every record of human achievement. There is no other greatness that is genuine. The great statesmen, the great authors, the great inventors, the great artists, are the men who, in their respective spheres, have ministered in some large way to the well-being of mankind. And this truth, which all human experience proves, is carried to its highest expression and demonstration in the life of the child of God, who exists, as his Master exists, as his Father in heaven exists, not to be served but to serve.

CHAPTER XXV.

FIVE NOTABLE WORDS FROM THE VOCABULARY OF EXPERIENCE.

JUSTIFICATION, Regeneration, Sanctification, Adoption, Everlasting Life; these five words constitute the second table of the Christian decalogue, the table of privilege, paralleling the table of duty.

Justification is the miracle of redemption. Love may forgive an offender; mercy may remit the penalty; but it takes infinite grace to justify him. Go to the prisoner's cell with a pardon in your hand. Bring him forth. Tell him he is a free man. Bid him take his place in the social and industrial world as if he had never forfeited his position there. Invite him to your home. Introduce him to your friends. Assure him that his past is blotted out; that it will never rise against him; that he is justified.

But he is not. He is pardoned. He is released from the penalty of his crime. A few generous souls will give him a helping hand. A very few will trust him, warily, and with mental reservations and sense of risk. But he is not justified, and never will be, so far as human society is concerned. His crime is an indelible memory in the minds of men. The stigma of it will cling to him wherever he goes; and in some awful moment, when he thinks he has escaped from it, it will leap out upon him and overwhelm him. Such is the impotence of human forgiveness.

Justified.

Not so with the forgiveness of God. He not only offers a full pardon to every penitent transgressor; he works that miracle of grace, so hopelessly beyond the power of human forgiveness. He justifies the sinner. He restores him to the standing of a sinless soul. There is not only "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" there is no reproach, no disability, no exclusion from holy society. The prodigal says, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." The father says, "This my son." He treats him as a son. He honors him as a son. He bestows upon him the vesture, the insignia, the dignity, the

princely estate of a son. No mention shall ever be made of his life of shame, but he shall be received in the society of the holiest in earth and in heaven, as if he had always been pure. This is justification.

A spiritual miracle.

Regeneration is a divine miracle wrought within a man, as justification is a divine miracle wrought in his behalf. It is one of the highest, the profoundest and the most mysterious themes ever discussed by our Lord, and, so far as we know, discussed with only one hearer, upon a single occasion. He did not explain it, but merely emphasized its mystery, its supernatural origin, and its necessity to salvation, and sent away his learned visitor baffled and humbled by a great truth, too vast and too deep for his comprehension.

But he revealed certain facts concerning it of momentous significance, which have made it one of the cardinal doctrines of the gospel. It is from above; it is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is like a birth, the beginning of a new life; it is a necessity; it is the production of a visible effect by an invisible cause. The apostles made much of these facts, and of this conception of the Christian as one newly born, newly created; and the conception helped

to keep in the minds and hearts of believers the sense of a living divine presence in the soul, and of the obligation to maintain the spiritual status of a regenerate life.

Among the facts revealed by our Lord concerning that life, the most practical is that, though we cannot understand the method by which the Spirit works, we can perceive the results. "Thou hearest the voice thereof." The regenerate man is conscious of a change in himself; and his outward life will make the change apparent to others. It is this transformation of character and life by the power of the Spirit that constitutes the strongest, and the absolutely unanswerable argument in support of this great doctrine of evangelical faith.

Making a saint.

Sanctification follows regeneration as a natural consequence, and under the same divine influence. It is progressive Christian life. The children of God are called "saints," that is, holy persons. To sanctify is to make holy, to make a saint. But saint-making is progressive and gradual. However instantaneous justification may be, and however complete, it is but the beginning of the Christian life. After that

come growth and progress. The sense of sin that leads a man to repent becomes more and more acute the holier he becomes. The faith that enables him to accept and appropriate the redemption offered him grows stronger and stronger with exercise. The love that pledges heart, mind, soul and strength in affectionate loyalty to God does not all at once fill and possess the soul. It is a thing of time and growth. Not to have kept one's first love were indeed a reproach; not to have deepened and intensified and expanded it, were a greater one. Beginning as a matter of choice, the choice grows into a habit, and the habit into an instinct, and the instinct into a great and abiding joy.

Righteousness, too, is a progressive thing, and is inseparable from sanctification. The art of right living, like other arts, is perfected by practice. The man who takes it up for the first time, feels and shows the awkwardness of the novice. Old habits cling to him, and often catch him unawares. The oath comes unbidden to the lips of the profane swearer, the flash of anger to the man of passion, the impure thought to the mind of the repentant debauchee. But as the man

wages the steady fight with himself, and the legion of temptations that assail him, depending not on his own strength, but on the grace of his divine Master, little by little he wins the victory. The old habit is supplanted by the new, unrighteousness by righteousness, pride by humility, arrogance by gentleness, passion by self-control.

Thus sanctification, like regeneration, is attested by its results, "the fruits of the Spirit," visible effects from an invisible cause.

Jesus prayed for the sanctification of his disciples. He did not ask that they might be comfortable, that they might be exempt from temptation, or trouble, or even persecution, but that they might be holy. "Sanctify them in the truth: . . . for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."

Child of God.

Adoption is the next word in the vocabulary of privilege; but it does not denote a new step in the order of experience. The Christian becomes a child of God at the moment of his conversion. His justification includes his admission to a child's privileges. The new birth is his

birth into the household of faith. His growth in grace and holiness is his increase in spiritual stature as a child of God. The terms which we are studying do not apply to so many different epochs or stages of Christian experience, but to its manifold aspects, the richness of the soul's endowment, the marvelous honors and privileges accorded it in the plan of redemption.

Our Father.

The Fatherhood of God was not a new idea in the world. The Jewish Scriptures speak of him as a Father, and ascribe to him some very tender sentiments, and some very gracious acts. He is "a Father of the fatherless." He pities his people "like as a father pitieth his children." Even pagans often applied the title to their chief gods. But neither Jew nor pagan rose to the height and dignity of the New Testament conception. The expression, "offspring of God," cited by Paul at Athens, from Cleanthes' famous Hymn to Zeus, and the seemingly equivalent expression, "children of God," as used by the apostle in the eighth of Romans, are as widely unlike in meaning as Zeus and Jehovah are in character.

It is the well-beloved Son of God who

has interpreted the divine fatherhood to us, and presented the heavenly Father in an aspect so real, so beautiful and so winning. He alone knew the Father, and what it meant to be his child. He came into the world that he might make it possible for men to become the children of God. How he loved to dwell upon the thought! What infinite meaning he seemed to find in it, and what infinite sweetness! John, the beloved disciple, felt the force of it, on its human side, and its gracious condescension on its divine side. "Behold," he exclaims, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God."

Divine fellowship.

Fellowship with God is the privilege of his children. It is a strange word to apply to the intercourse of man with his Maker, but it is a word of God's own choosing. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." One of the most beautiful things in the life of our Lord was his fellowship with the Father, his constant sense of the Father's presence, the spontaneous interchange of thought between them, as between friend and loving friend. And it was this great joy that he

made possible to his disciples, and that he coveted for them. "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

It is in this fellowship of the Heavenly Father with his earthly child that we find the Christian meaning of prayer. Not the attempt to conciliate an obdurate and reluctant divinity, but the communion of a trustful child with a willing Father, a loving disciple with a gracious Master, a sanctified soul with the sanctifying, comforting Spirit, who "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Eternal life.

Eternal Life is the last great theme in our series, and brings the gospel decalogue to an appropriate close. Our Lord had much to say upon the subject, and every other subject he discoursed upon was vitally connected with this.

Eternal life in the gospel sense is something more than the natural immortality of man, the mere endlessness of existence. It is an immortality "brought to light" by the gospel; therefore it had not been brought to light before. It is conditioned upon faith in Christ; therefore it is the

possession of believers only. It is the special gift of Christ. "I give unto them eternal life." It is an inalienable gift. "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Its ultimate sphere is heaven. "I go to prepare a place for you," it will bring the redeemed soul into the presence of Christ. "That where I am, there ye may be also."

We know very little about that place. The Bible gives no descriptions of it. We have no faculties yet with which to comprehend it. But we are sure that he who has made such splendid provision for our earthly home, will make satisfactory provision for the heavenly; that he who has purchased eternal life for us at such a price will make it worthy of its cost; and that where he is must be the most desirable place in the universe for those who love him.

And so there rises before us again the supreme attraction of the Bible, the picture of that bright scene where, over all the evils and troubles of earth is written "No MORE," and over all the joy and glory of heaven, "FOR EVER AND EVER."

CHAPTER XXVI.

REFLECTIONS AND SIDE-LIGHTS ON BIBLICAL ATTRACTIONS.

In the preceding pages we have taken a rapid survey of the Holy Scriptures, with reference to their attractiveness, using the term in its larger sense, as embracing all the elements which are fitted to win the attention of the reader, awaken his interest, merit his appreciation and reward his study.

Bible attractions.

We have found an attractiveness in the story of the Book itself, its origin, the sources of its material, the process of its formation, its variety, its unity, its divine purpose, and its steady, unhalting progress toward its predestined end.

We have noted the attractive quality of its great ideas, its conception of God, its estimate of man, its system of morals, its appeals to the spiritual nature, its standards of character, its ideals of rectitude, holiness and noble living.

Interesting people have come under our observation, men and women, saints and sinners, some of them interesting as examples, and some as warnings. We have been admitted to the intimacies of their homes, learned the secrets of their hearts, and watched the pretty romances and the pitiful tragedies of their lives.

We have read the world's history in the light of revelation, as recorded in the chronicles of the past, and as predicted in the prophecies of the future. We have witnessed the crowning and uncrowning of kings, the making and unmaking of nations, and have seen how it all shapes itself according to a divine plan, which is itself shaped with reference to the moral and spiritual welfare of mankind. We have seen the Hebrew race selected, isolated and trained for a sacred mission; small and weak among the nations of the earth, yet in influence and importance the greatest of them all; fickle and unfaithful, yet entrusted with a holy treasure; scourged, plundered, oppressed, enslaved, yet preserved, delivered, reinstated, that they might be the depositary and almoner of divine truth.

We have noted the significance and

beauty of that truth, the ideas that dominate it, and the notable career of the people who are dominated by it. We have scanned the literature they produced, prosaic and poetical, so full of beauty, instruction and inspiration, preserved and handed down from age to age, amid all the changing fortunes and the manifold misfortunes of the people that possessed it. Truth.

We have seen history explained, prophecy verified, and human hopes fufilled, in the coming of the predicted Messiah, Son of God and Son of man, himself the greatest of biblical attractions, and the source of attractiveness to all the rest. We have beheld the perfectness of his character, and felt the charm of his words, the nobility of his life, the pathetic mystery of his death. Supreme attraction.

We have seen the Christian church formed and educated for its work, rising to its great opportunity, and making world-wide conquests through the power of its divine Master. We have read the words of its great leaders and teachers, heard their exposition of the truths they proclaimed and have looked upon the visions they beheld of the future triumphs of the church, the rewards of God's peo-

ple, the splendors of their final home, and their heritage of glory and life everlasting.

Personal appeal.

And besides these more obvious attractions of the Bible, which are fitted to appeal to the reason and the moral sense of the most casual reader, we have found others that are more sacredly personal, and that appeal to what is deepest and most spiritual in the human soul. We not only find a true conception of God, we learn to know him, and to enter into communion and fellowship with him, as friend with friend. We not only find a satisfactory philosophy of life, we find practical help in the difficult task of right living, counsel in perplexity, help in weakness, comfort in sorrow, glad songs for the hour of joy, a pathway of light through the valley of the shadow of death. It is these things that make the Old Book dear to us, and that draw us to it again and again and again, as to the fountain of perennial strength.

Other sacred books."

The Sacred Books of Other Religions have their attractions. They contain some of the great ideas presented in the Bible. They teach many sound moral precepts, and many valid truths of religion. If it were not so, they would have no hold upon

the religious nature of man. But they lack other elements that are vital and essential. Not one of them presents the full complement of truth contained in the Bible. Not one of them gives us an harmonious and self-consistent system of truth. They have not the power that the Bible has to stir the soul to its depths, to produce such nobility of character, to make such moral heroes, to create such institutions, or to promote such a quality of personal and public righteousness, unselfishness, and world-wide beneficence.

The measure of attraction is its effect. Physical attraction is estimated by the power it exerts; literary attractions by the number and the kind of people affected by them. Applying this test to biblical literature, we find it incomparably more attractive than that of any other religion, ancient or modern. It is superior to them, for one thing, on account of its many-sidedness. The sacred books of Confucianism, Buddhism, Brahminism, Mohammedanism, and the other so-called ethnic religions, are attractive within certain race limits only. They are identified with the people who produced them and the institutions produced by them. They have no

message for mankind at large. And even within their special sphere of influence they chiefly interest the philosopher and the ecclesiastic, and not the masses of the people. The Bible, on the contrary, is for all races and all men. The scholar finds in it the highest and the profoundest ranges of thought, and the common people a word in season for every time of need. The religion it teaches has more adherents to-day than any other religion in the world, and their number is increasing every day.

Literary charms of Bible.

The Bible in Literature is another significant tribute to its attractiveness. Many of the world's great literary masterpieces, like Dante's Divine Comedy, Milton's Paradise Lost, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, are simply the presentation in imaginative form of biblical facts and beliefs; while a large part of all the literature worth reading in the languages of Christendom abound in biblical conceptions, citations, imagery and expressions. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, are notable examples; and it would be hard to find any really great author of modern times who might not be added to the list.

Tennyson alone is said to have used more than three hundred Scripture quotations and allusions. Such is the tribute of literary genius to the attractions of the Bible; and such is the extent to which literature is indebted to it for its own attractive power. It may be too much to say that if the Bible were destroyed it could be entirely recovered from the pages of secular literature; but it is not too much to say that if the biblical elements were taken out of our secular literature, it would be robbed of its finest material, and much of it would be reduced to a fragmentary and unintelligible mass. Even the literature of infidelity is indebted to the Bible for intellectual stimulus, and for the liberty of speech it so grossly abuses.

Moreover, if the attractiveness of a book is indicated by the extent of its use and its circulation, the Bible is the most attractive book in the world. No other book approaches it in either the number of copies sold or the number of people who read them. Where other books sell by hundreds or by thousands, the Bible sells by millions. Hundreds of millions of people read and study it. They pore over its pages day by day. They gather weekly

for its systematic study. They employ men who have expert knowledge of it to expound its teachings in elaborate discourses. They found and endow institutions to train men for this work. They organize societies for its circulation, and others for the propagation of its truths. Great scholars devote their lives to the most laborious and painstaking tasks of investigation and interpretation; and books upon the Bible and the themes related to it are so popular and so much in demand, that in the annual output of the press they outnumber those in any other department, fiction only excepted. Indeed, fiction itself, including the drama, creates its greatest heroes according to the ideals of character furnished by the Bible, and embodies in its best plots the principles of morality, and the strict lessons of moral cause and effect, the success of virtue, the ultimate defeat of evil, in which Bible-reading people have for generations been taught to believe.

Bible in art.

The Bible in Art is another method by which biblical attractions are indirectly but most effectively presented. Painting and sculpture charm us with their biblical subjects, which include many of the great

masterpieces of the world, their madonnas, their Christs, their saints and angels, and scenes from sacred story. Architecture culminates in the cathedral, which not only exists for the promotion of biblical religion, but, with its statues, its bas-reliefs, its frescoes, its mosaics, its manifold suggestions and symbols, presents biblical scenes and ideas in tangible form. Music finds its grandest themes and inspirations in the Bible, and has based upon them many of its grandest works. Its oratorios, its anthems, its sentences, its paraphrases of Scripture words, and the great tumultuous volume of song, rising perpetually from the multitude that no one can number, show how powerfully the Bible appeals to the deepest emotions of the human heart.

Yet our study of both the direct and the indirect attractions of the Bible teach us that they do not act upon us as the attraction of gravitation acts, independently of our wills and our attitude of mind. Rather, as the attractiveness of scenery, or pictures, or music, depends upon our susceptibility to their influence, so does that of the Bible. Some persons find it attractive to them, and some do not. Some are more

strongly attracted by it than others; and the same persons find it more attractive at some times than at others. A practical question, therefore, is, How can one put himself in such a mental and spiritual attitude toward the Bible as to appreciate its attractions to the fullest extent?

Study of Bible charming.

Biblical Study would seem to be too obvious a means of culture in this direction to need mention; yet it is far too important a means to be omitted. Emerson says, "Books do not speak till they are spoken to;" and the Bible is no exception to this rule. It is the person who seeks for its message, and opens his mind to receive it, to whom it will come with meaning and power. Other things being equal, it is those who have most thoroughly explored its treasures, and become most familiar with its contents, who feel its attractions most strongly. Nor is there any other book in the world, for the study of which such ample facilities are afforded, none to the interpretation of which so much time, learning and talent has been devoted. Besides such formal works as cyclopedias, dictionaries, commentaries, and treatises on special topics, there is a vast wealth of instruction in current periodical litera-

ture, including religious departments in the secular press, and the various helps provided in connection with the Sunday-school lessons. Archæology is lending invaluable aid. Never were explorations in Bible lands, especially in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, so interesting as in our day, and never so illuminating to the Bible student.

No such outside helps, however, can take the place of personal study. The most fruitful biblical culture, and that which brings biblical beauties and treasures most vividly to view, comes not from the study of books about the Bible, but from the study of the Bible itself, whose facts and truths these various side-lights serve to illuminate, and without which they will be to us mere scholarly ruminations and tales of discovery.

Education and Bible.

The Bible in Education is another potent factor in presenting its attractions to cultured minds, and giving it its proper place among the intellectual forces of the world. In our colleges both required and voluntary courses in Bible study are bringing a large and increasing number of students under the influence of biblical thought and biblical ethics; while the res-

toration of the Bible to its former place in public school education is now advocated by many of our most advanced educators, and is already partially accomplished. While we shrink from the union of church and state, and while we are constitutionally forbidden to teach any form of religion under governmental auspices, we are not required to divorce religion from our public life. We are not a pagan nation, but a Christian nation. By our history, by the vows of our fathers, by their covenant with God, and by the spirit and structure of our government and institutions, we are as distinctly pledged to Christianity as Turkey is pledged to Mohammedanism. We swear witnesses in court, and judges, legislators and presidents into office, in the name of God, and upon his Word. Our army and navy are supplied with chaplains. Our state and national legislatures are opened daily with prayer. Our President annually calls upon the nation to observe a day of thanksgiving to the Almighty. We have laws for the preservation of the sanctity of the Sabbath and for the prevention of blasphemy. Our judicial system is largely based upon the teaching of the Bible, and wholly in har-

mony with it. Daniel Webster declared that the Bible is a part of our common law. A majority of our citizens are at least nominal adherents of Christianity, and wish their children instructed in its precepts. While we teach them all other literature, good and bad, ancient and modern, we should surely teach them the best literature in the world. While we teach them classical and Oriental mythology, with all its horrors and indecencies, we should not fail to educate them in the sound morality of the divine law, and the pure and beautiful precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.

In the family.

The Bible in the Family is another method of bringing biblical attractions to the attention of susceptible minds. Whatever may or may not be true as to the current neglect of family worship and family instruction in biblical knowledge, there can be no doubt as to the salutary influence of such worship and instruction in familiarizing the children and youth with the Word of God, and sweetening the whole home life with the influence of divine truth and the voice of prayer. It would do not a little to revive, in our hurrying, strenuous times, the old Hebrew idea of the family as a little kingdom of God.

The preacher.

The Bible in Public Discourse is a perpetuation of the most ancient method of bringing a divine message to men, that of oral instruction. What the patriarch was to his household or the prophet to his generation, the preacher is to his people. The message which he brings them from God's Word has all the sanctity and authority it had when first delivered to men. His interpretation of it may be wrong, his conclusions from it illogical, his presentation of it weak and ineffective; but the divine message remains in unimpaired significance and beauty. And if he have the divine unction as well, if he be fitted for his high vocation, he will so elaborate his theme, throwing upon it the light of concurrent truth, the light of history, the light of science, the light of experience, the light of scholarship, and so infuse into it his own glowing fervor and enthusiasm, as to make it a fresh revelation of the attractiveness of the Old Book.

Experience.

The Bible in Personal Experience, is, however, the most important of all methods of both testing and increasing its attractiveness. The beauty of a picture is not in the canvas or the pigments, but in the eye that transforms them into land-

scapes and sunsets. The music that thrills us is not in the harp-string or the organ-pipe, but in the ear attuned to its harmony, and the emotional response in us to the feeling it expresses. So the appeals of the Bible to the human soul vary with the soul's spiritual condition and capacity. We enhance its charms by cultivating in ourselves that spiritual life which it commends to us, and that spiritual susceptibility to which all its attractions appeal. It is he who knows God best, through personal communion and fellowship, to whom his character seems fairest, his words sweetest, and his ways most gracious and wonderful. It is to the redeemed man that the story of redemption is most interesting. It is the man who has hidden the Word of God in his heart, who lives by its precepts, who is guided by its wisdom, who has tested and verified its promises, who has built its great truths into his soul, who is in profoundest sympathy with its ideas, its meaning and its purpose, it is he to whom will be revealed most largely and most attractively, THE CHARMS OF THE OLD BOOK.

THE END.

INDEX.

	PAGE
Accountability, laws of	65
Adoption	290
Antioch, revival in	258
Apocalypse, The	271
Apocrypha, The	189
Arad, King, war with	101
Art, Bible in	302
Art, Christ in	227
Attractiveness in books, importance of	7
Attractiveness of Bible, how to increase it	303
Baptism of Jesus	228
Beginning, The	46
Bible, The, a book of religion	19
diversity of	16
first installment of	23
history of	21
in education	305
of the patriarchs	74
study of	304
unity of	17
Cain	63
Campaigns under Moses	101
Canaan, conquest of	106
Canaanites, destruction of	112
Captivity, Babylonian	138
Child Jesus	227
Christ, divinity of	222
humanity of	223
Church, Apostolic	251
Christian, characteristics of	245
glory of	252
spirit of	247
Conquest, Stories of Christian	254
Creation, method of	48
story of	47
Daniel, Book of	180
story of	179
David, reign of	125
Desert, The School in the	88
Discourses of Jesus	232-239
Dispersion of race	75
Disruption of Hebrew Monarchy	130
Earth, creation of the	51
Eber, progenitor of Hebrew race	77
Ecclesiastes, Book of	172
Eden, story of	53
Egyptian exile, the	79
Emancipation, the great	79
Esther, story of	180
Evangelical, term defined	9
Evolution theory, relation to biblical fact	52
Experience, as a means of enhancing attractions	307
as a mode of revelation	36
Faith, a great gospel idea	278
Family, Bible in the	307
divine ordinance of	55
Father as household priest	25
Fatherhood of God	291
Fellowship with God	292
First biblical critics	35
First crime	64
Five Notable Words from Vocabulary of Duty	275
Five Notable Words from Vocabulary of Experience	285
Flood, Chaldean account of	70
ethnic traditions of	68
moral significance of	72
superiority of biblical account of	70
Four Pillars of Gospel History	207
Four pillars of world history	44
Genealogies of Old Testament, importance of	37
Genesis and science	49
Gideon, story of	178
God, New Testament conception of	220
Old Testament conception of	196
the Great Servant	283
Triunity of	221
with Us	220
God's leadership of Israel	109
Great Teacher, The	232

	PAGE
Greatness, Christ's measure of.	284
Gutenberg, statue of	46
Happiness of Jesus	230
Headship of Christ	248
Heavens, the, wonders of	50, 51
Hebrew race, origin of	77
Heroic Age, The	100
Holy Spirit in Christian Church	249
Ideals of Christ Child, the	227
Individuality preserved under inspiration	208
Inspiration claimed but not explained	18
Inspired omissions in Bible	36, 37
Isaac and Rebecca, story of	181
Israel, Kingdom of	131
Kings of	132
Jacob, story of	176
James, letter of	267
Jephthah, story of	179
Jesus, boyhood of	228
ministry of	230
power of personality of	242
Job, Book of	162
teachings of	166
John, Gospel of	217
letters of	267
personality of	216
Joseph, story of	177
Josephus, Works of	190
Joshua, as a leader of Israel	105
farewell address of	114
Judah, Kingdom of	134
Jude, letter of	269
Jurisprudence, Hebrew system of	96
Justification, New Testament idea of	286
Law, natural and divine	58
necessary to a moral system	92
fulfilled by Christ	202-205
Letters, Some Priceless Old	262
as a literary form	263
Life, Eternal, as an experience	293
the blessed	235
Limitations of present discussion	8
Literature, the Bible in	300
Love as a Christian grace	280
Luke, Gospel of	215
influence of Paul on	212
personality of	213
Man, imperial position of	57
long preparation for	53
moral nature of	56
Mark, Gospel of	211
influence of Peter on	211
personality of	212
Matthew, Gospel of	211
personality of	210
Menephtah, the Pharaoh of the Exodus	83
Midianites, punishment of	103
Miracles, in the Desert	89
of Jesus	239
Morality, identical with religion	201
Old Testament standard of	200
Moses, as a prophet	39
death-song of	39
great orations of	39
story of	178
Mother and child	226
Mothers the first prophets	24
Mount, Sermon on the	233
Narrative form, large use of in Bible	209
National affairs, God in	199
Nativity, glory of the	224
Nature, Hebrew idea of God's relation to	197
Noachian deluge, traditions of	69
Noah and family	73
Og, King of Bashan, war with	102
Oldest Story in the World	44-52
Oral quality in almost all Scripture	42
Tradition, Charm of	29-43
Parables of Jesus	218
Parallelism in Hebrew poetry	158
Patriarchal life, influence of	78
system, favorable to oral tradition	33
Paul, conversion of	259
letters of	264-266
missionary career of	260
Personal appeal of the Bible	298
Peter, letters of	267
Philip the evangelist	257
Pillars of world-history	44, 209
of Gospel History, Four	207
Plagues of Egypt, the	85
Poetry, Hebrew, peculiarities of	156
Probation of man	59
Prophecy, divine authority of	142
nature and scope of	140
permanent value of	151
place and importance in Scripture	151
Proverbs, Book of	167
permanent truths in	169
personal element in	170
principal theme of	168
Providence, Hebrew conception of	198
Psalms, Book of	160
main theme of	161
Races, the three great	75, 76

	PAGE
Rameses II, the Pharaoh of the Oppression	83
Red Sea, crossing of the	86
Religion of Hebrews spectacular	93
Repentance as a requirement of the gospel	276
Revelation, Book of	189
Righteousness as a requirement of the gospel	281
Ruth, relation to Christ	184
story of	183
Sabbatic system of Hebrews	93
Saint-making	288
Samaria, revival in	256
Samson, story of	178
Saul of Tarsus	259
Saul the King, reign of	124
Septuagint, The	189
Sermon on the Mount	233
Servant, The Great	283
Service as an essential requirement	282
Sihon King of the Amorites, war with	102
Sin, beginning of	59
self-punishment of	66
Sinai, year at	91
Solomon, reign of	126-129
Song of Songs, The	174
Story-Book, The Inspired	175-185
Teacher, The Great	232-243
Temptation of Jesus	229
Terah and his sons, migration of	77
Theocracy, the Hebrew	122
Tradition, Oral, Charm of	30
corruption of	45
how shaped	36
Triunity of God	221
Two Brothers, The Story of the	62
Unity of the Old and the New Testaments	194
Ur of the Chaldees	77
Voice, the, chief medium of instruction	39
Voiceless Centuries, The	186
Wise men, the	227
Woman, in the Christian Church	246
praise of	171

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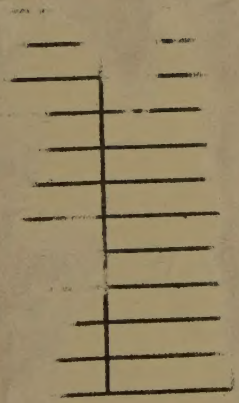

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